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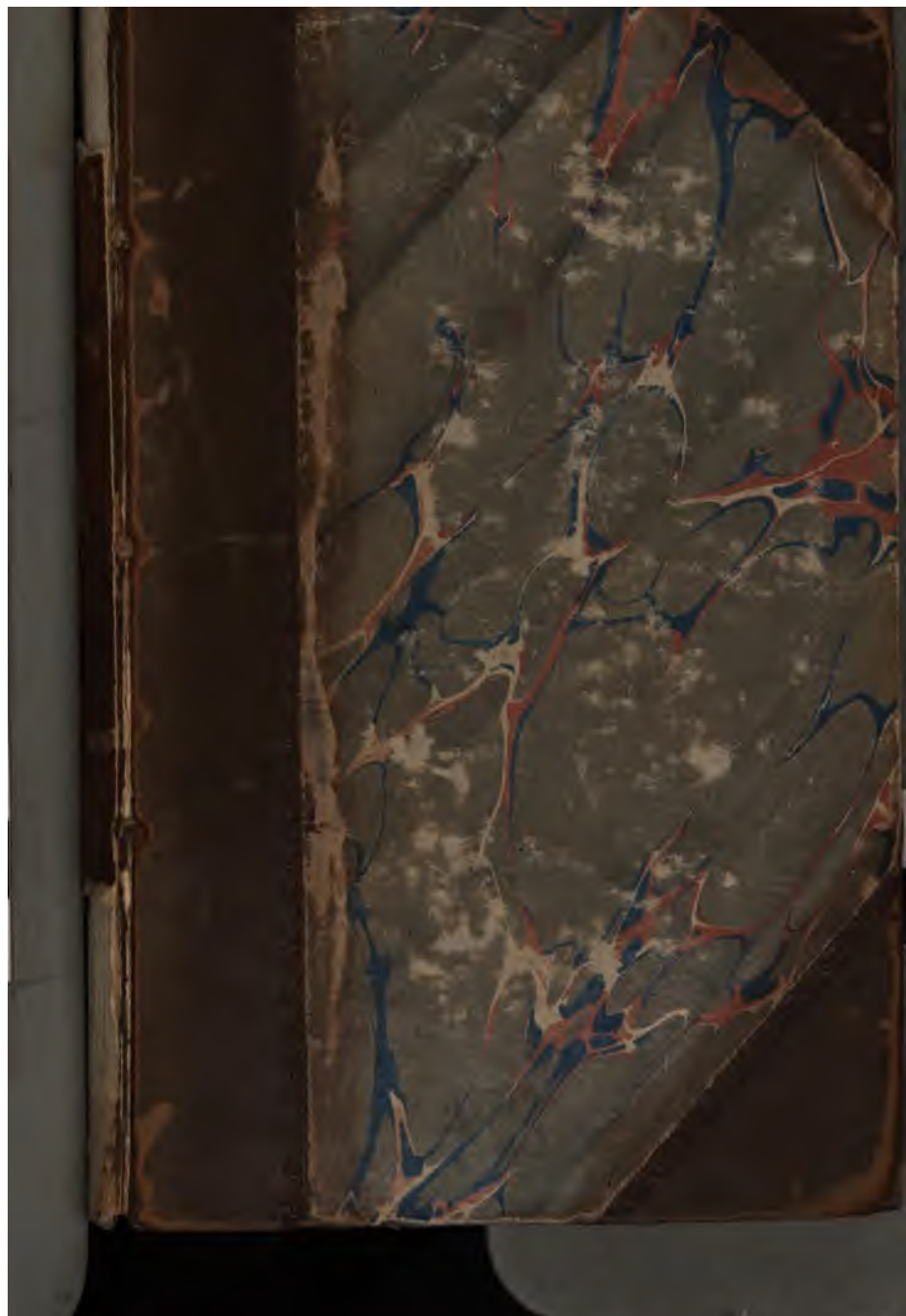
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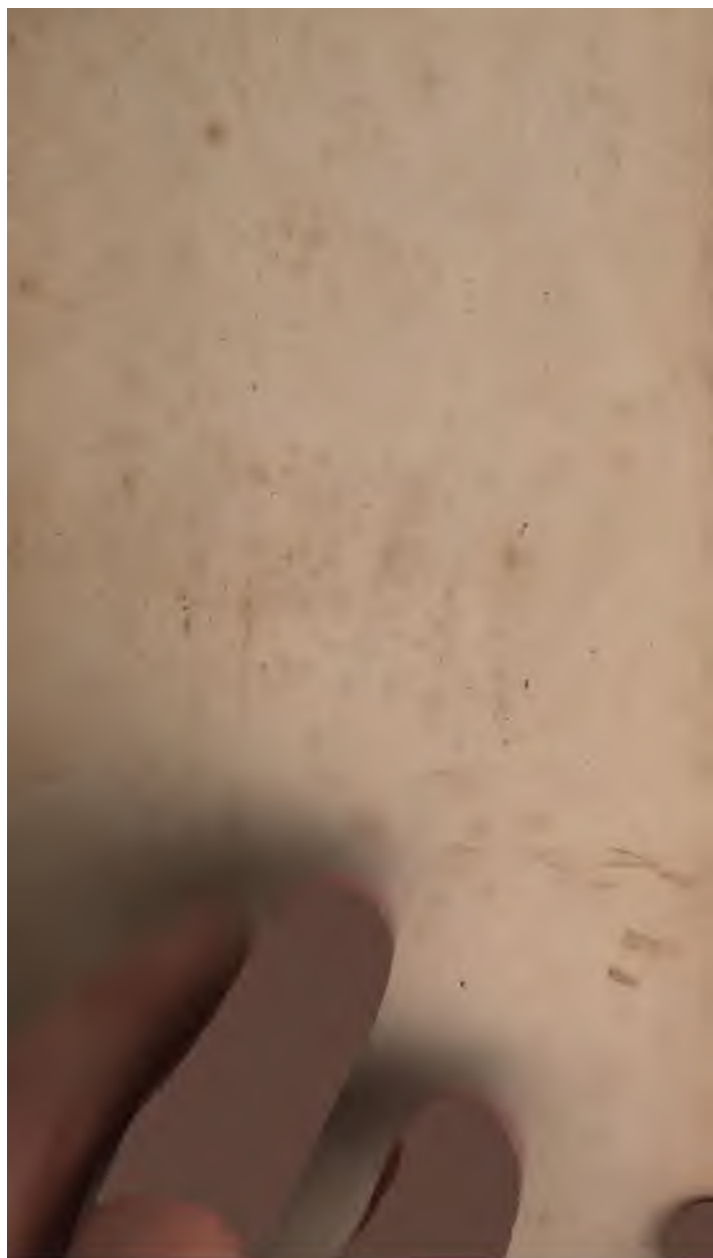
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**A SERIES OF LAY SERMONS**

**ON GOOD PRINCIPLES**

**AND GOOD BREEDING**

**BY THE ETTRICK SHEPHERD**

**LONDON**

**JAMES FRASER REGENT STREET**

**MDCCCXXXIV**

*149.*



## PREFACE.

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IT being likely that after the publication of this volume I shall be called to fill a chair of moral philosophy in some one of the cities of the United States, or Oxford at least ; therefore, to prevent disappointment on the one side, and awkwardness on the other, I hereby profess, that a great number of the most valuable maxims and observations in the following work are taken from a MS. translation of the works of an old French monk of the last century, whose name, as the writer of them, or as an author at all, I have never been able to find out in any history or biography.



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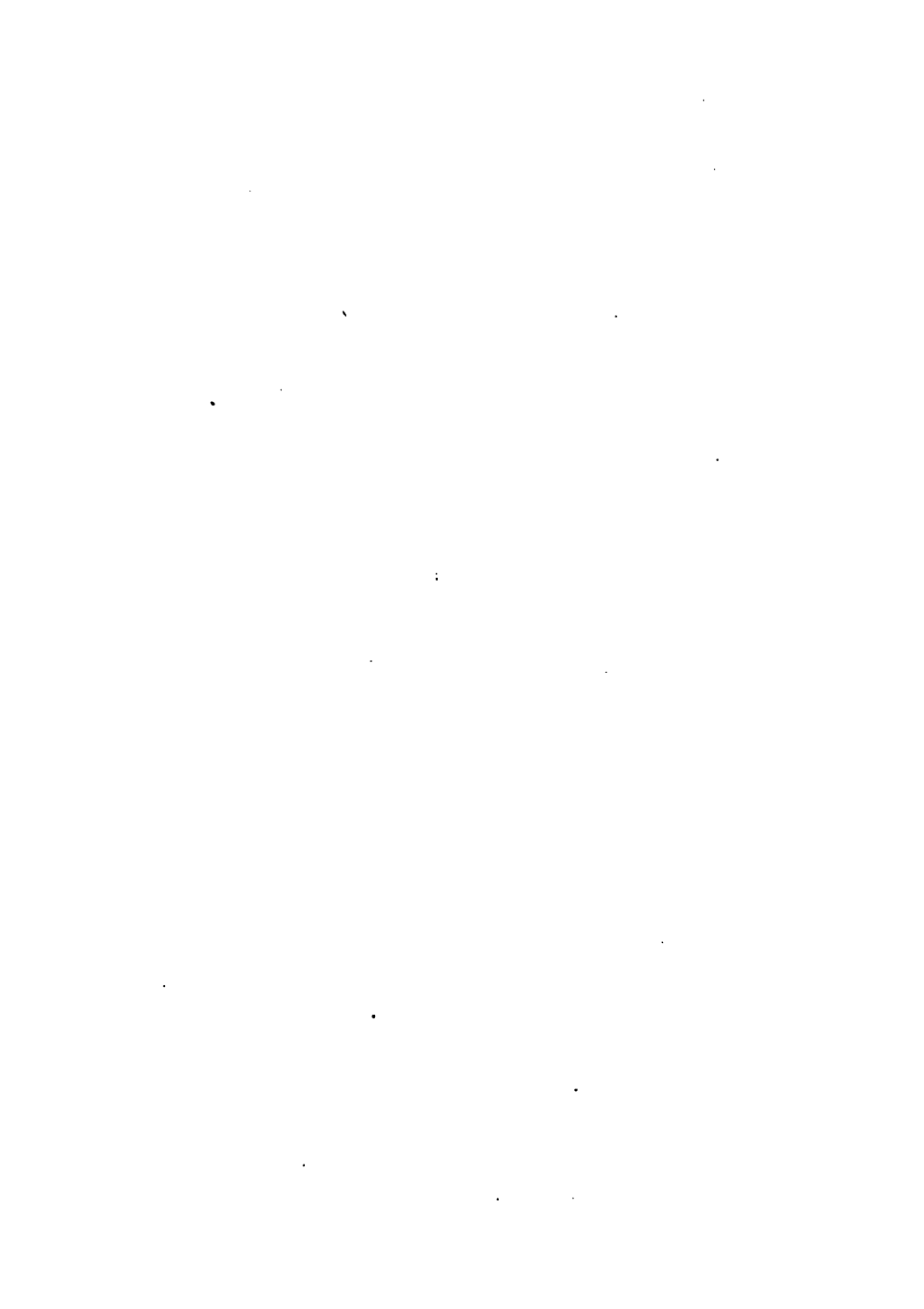
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A SERIES  
OF  
LAY SERMONS.

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SERMON I.

GOOD PRINCIPLES.

“ Why will you bring down my grey hairs with  
sorrow to the grave ?”

MEN and brethren—I address particularly this discourse to my own sex—whether is it better to reflect seriously and frequently on the approaches of old age, or to allow ourselves to be surprised by some remarkable instances of failing, which cannot be disputed ? This is a question on which I have often studied, but own to you that I cannot decide it. Frequent and serious meditation on such a subject, one should think, must be very necessary. But then

the altered features of old age become agreeable to us by looking at them. We flatter our own grey hairs; and find always such freshness along with our fading, as serves to cherish the opinion, that we are younger than we are, and that we shall live longer than it is possible for us to do.

When I look back on my past life, I see nothing but a vain show through all the space that is past; and when I seriously contemplate the future, I am compelled to believe that the termination of my life is at no great distance. And yet, for all the maxims which I have been able to found on this certain and necessary truth, I cannot say that I think more now of the uncertainty and vanity of life than I did thirty years ago. We are old men before we think much of old age, and are never the first to observe our own decline; nor are the hints given us by our friends exceedingly well received. This is owing, in some degree, to the law of

our constitution, which fixes us for a considerable number of years, in the middle period of life, in a state which neither increases nor decays. But it is owing still more to the wisdom of Providence, which has not suffered our relish for life to be destroyed by the certainty of death. Every man has proper seasons for reflection; and, as I am best acquainted with my own thoughts on all subjects, I freely tell you that I have struggled against every suggestion concerning my age; yet I cannot help occasionally stating to myself the probable termination of my life, calculating how many years are likely to elapse before I reach it, and then grasping in my mind the space of as many years which are past. The imaginary period, indeed, is still to come, but I have a standard by which I can measure it; and if I were wise, I might know what it will be. A young man does not possess this advantage. The period of his past life, on which he reflects, is clouded with



the ambiguous and uncertain impressions of his infancy. There is something like an eternity that is past hanging on the retrospect. And yet when he takes the whole amount of his life in years, there is a prospect of more to come. With regard to myself, then, I will venture to say, that I was beginning to be an old man as soon as I tried to look forward to the probable termination of my life, and compared it with a fixed number of years already past. I do not desire, however, any one who reads this to apply the rule to himself for finding the beginning of old age. *Bring not down your grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.*

You will naturally ask me, how a man should enjoy the evening of life? Should he marry? By all means. It is the wisest thing he can do. But if he passes forty-five, he should make no unnecessary delay, for he is not far from being old enough. But at any age below sixty, or perhaps seventy, I think his wisest course

is to marry ; and I shall give you my reasons for it, which I think you will not deny are cogent ones.

You can scarcely call it a failing of old age, but surely one of its concomitants is, to fix our affections more strongly on the persons around us, in proportion as we are about to leave them. We are, perhaps, more susceptible of flattery as we advance in life, or perhaps our age and our weakness together have contracted the circle of our friends. It is, then, the duty of every man to provide against the inconvenience of this secluded state. Let him rear a circle of tender and attached friends around him, who will serve him with affection, and whom he can love without fear. There is joy in the respect paid to you by your countrymen ; there is joy in literary or warrior fame ; but there is no earthly joy like that of the parent of a virtuous family.

I have had many occasions to see the reverse of this picture, and I confess

I never saw it without pity and regret. A solitary stunted tree in the midst of a desert gives you but a faint emblem of it ; you see a man who has outlived the pleasures and the uses of living. If he is poor, he is neglected ; and if rich, he has reason to suspect every person who approaches him of selfishness. His mercenary hirelings, who counterfeit affection, contrive to banish his real friends. He has no hold of that chain which connects a man with future generations. He has no stimulus to quicken the energies of his mind ; and is shut out for ever from the best and only enjoyment of old age, that of his children and grand-children waiting on him with the fondest attention, and never rising up or looking him in the face but to bless him.

Although all the wit and raillery which a certain class of young men employ against the married state were founded in truth and reason, yet they had better enter into it than live on to this unpepied

and unprotected stage of existence. That their humour is affected, I can easily believe; for I never knew an instance of such raillery from a man upwards of sixty. Let me advise you, therefore, and I do it most earnestly, to avoid this intemperance, which gives a pledge to your friends against your own happiness, a reason to yourself against entering into that state which will promote it, and which, if you live as long as I have done, and as I wish you to do, you yourself will condemn with unavailing remorse, and *bring down your grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.*

Take a prospect of human life through the vista of reason, and you must perceive that it is a voyage to an undiscovered country. Our provisions wear out, and the vessel turns crazy as we advance. It is a voyage which we have begun, and which we should try to bring to as happy and prosperous a termination as possible. What, then, can we do better than to lay in a good store of provisions,

to have honest and true messmates, and with all our skill to steer clear of the quicksands which would swallow us up, and the rocks on which we may be dashed to pieces. With these precautions, Providence for our pilot, and religion for our sheet-anchor, we shall enter the harbour with hope, and look back on the dangers that we have escaped with pleasure and exultation.

There are a number of men, my neighbours and intimate acquaintances, and as good, kind-hearted gentlemen as exist, who, in spite of all that their worthy pastor and I have said to them, still persist in framing objections to the married state. First, they were too young, and their circumstances not sufficiently affluent; then they had some future plan of life which was not matured; then, all at once, they became too old! They now say, it is a melancholy thing to see a man advanced in years with a family about him, whom he can never expect to see settled in the

world. But they do not consider that this is melancholy only to the looker-on, not to the man himself. We shall soon be convinced of this, if we consider that we lay as extensive plans, and plant even more trees, both fruit and forest ones, in our old age, than we do in the vigour and prime of youth. The children of an old man give youth and life to his mind; he lives in them, and they hold him, in spite of himself, in connexion with the world, and are a bed of roses to him in his last decline of life. I am far from asserting, with Voltaire, that a family is the sole chance that a man has for immortality; but they certainly give him a chance of living in them until the end of time. I am even grieved to the heart, to see an old favourite tree fall down through decay, and not have one stem springing from its root.

The same temper which makes a man contented with his situation in life, furnishes him with the means of happiness.



There is nothing, therefore, more necessary for a man who is approaching the verge of old age, than to cultivate those dispositions of mind which give him friends and cheerfulness at the same time. The rule is easy. Be always more ready to attend to the wants and claims of others, than to exact from them the sacrifices which pride demands. Pride can never bring happiness either in youth or old age. It has an appetite which no respectfulness can satiate, and at the same time a forbidding sourness of aspect that restrains men from giving it the food which it craves. No man can help contemplating the fall of the proud with less compassion than he bestows on the afflicted.

The pleasure of gaining friends is to me the highest of the world. As an old man, I consider myself, on every new accession of this kind, to have touched at some friendly coast, and laid in a fresh stock of necessaries and comforts for my perilous voyage. It is another link added



to the chain which attaches me to the world I live in; and as long as I am enabled to gain the affections, and capable of becoming an object of good will to him, I think I am living to some purpose. My own feelings, and the satisfaction of indulging them, convince me of the great use of cultivating benevolent affections, and as much as possible of subduing the tendency in old age to pride and selfishness. A man of an opposite temper complains of the world, when he should complain of himself. His pride is a coat of mail which has defended him against friendship, and his selfishness has become covetousness, merely to give play to his affections. I never yet knew a man capable of making friends in his youth become a miser in his old age. The extraordinary love of money at this stage of life, I have generally found to be a new direction to malevolent passions or licentious enjoyments, which could no longer

be indulged. We need not wonder, then, to see old men covetous; but we must pity them when we see them thus *bringing down their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.*

I have never yet been able properly to understand what Mr. James Russell would call the *otium cum dignitate* of an old man. It is supposed by some, that there is a certain period of life at which we ought to retire from public view, and leave the field open to vigorous and ambitious young men, who will tread the stage with a firmer step, and conduct the business of literature or common life with greater activity. I confess I am beginning to feel this; at least, as far as poetry is concerned; and have given up the field to my younger competitors, with a full dependence on what I have done. Many of my friends will be sorry to read this; but if the revolution of human affairs makes it necessary to retire from a parti-

cular situation, it is surely best for such a person to submit quietly to his destiny, and withdraw with a good grace.

Still, I cannot believe there is a given period in every man's life, or in any man's life, at which he should retire from the duties of his station. We have no right to say, that because a man has laboured in an honourable and industrious way for twenty or thirty years, that it is then time for him to sit down and do no more. I object to the position; because there are few who can afford to do it; and, moreover, the habits of industry are painful to give up after being so long accustomed to them. I would, therefore, seriously advise old men to continue on in their accustomed employment, lest *they bring down their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.*

I do not deny that many old men are jostled from the active scenes of life by the impetuosity of young men, who are eager to occupy their stations. But when

this happens it is a misfortune, not a privilege ; and it is a man's duty to defend himself, by every just method, against any such encroachments made upon him. The difficulty, no doubt, is increased when the station requires activity and diligence more than experience and wisdom ; yet, in most of the instances of this kind which I have witnessed, and been at the trouble to examine, I have found the blame to be more in the weakness of the man than the infirmities of his age.

I do not at all consider old age to be such a state of helpless depression of the powers of the mind as it is generally supposed to be ; and I beg that you will attend to this in the latter stage of life, as it may be of some use to you. We are not fond of acknowledging the infirmities really connected with old age, and we are very old men before we will allow that age is the cause of our failing. In other distresses of life we accept the sympathy of our friends, because our vigour may be

restored ; but in old age we are often hurt by their sympathy, because the disease is incurable. When we are convicted of any of the undeniable marks of age, as wrinkles, grey hairs, or defect of sight, it is both laughable and pitiable to hear every one asserting that these are not the marks of age in his case, as he had had them all since he was thirty !

It is a pity that any one should indulge in such ingenious delusions ; for it is our bounden duty to accustom ourselves to the thoughts of the very rapid approach either of death or old age. I have no objections to the conceit that we are extremely vigorous for our years ; but let us, at all events, be convinced that old age and death are fast approaching, and let us be prepared for either. We know, to a certainty, that we must all shortly follow one another into the dark and silent mansions of the grave ; but, blessed be God, we have also the prospect of fol-

lowing one another into the regions of eternal happiness !

I therefore conceive that the best species of discipline for these great changes, is to subject our minds, as well as our bodies, to vigorous exercises as long as we are able ; for I am certain that exercise and temperance preserve the body in a sound state ; and equally certain, that delightful study, the exercise of the mind, gives full vigour to its powers until extreme old age. It is rare that a studious man outlives his faculties, unless these faculties have been very rath in their growth ; for precocity of talent never abides till old age. Providence by this seems to afford us a proof of the vanity of all human acquirements, by giving an extraordinary display of mental exertions at one period of life, and taking them away at another.

At all events, there is one fact, which I think my limited knowledge of the world

warrants me in asserting. It is, that in proportion as we improve the powers of our mind, we shall retain them for a shorter or longer period. I have always found a greater number of old men of sound and vigorous minds engaged in the professions which require thought, than in those which require little mental exertion. Perhaps something may be deducted for the original strength and turn of mind which fitted them for their profession : but I do not allow much for this ; as I am firmly persuaded that no man can know what length he is able to proceed in literary pursuits, or in a liberal profession, till he makes the trial. Genius, or what may be called a peculiar fitness of mind, will certainly lead one man to a greater height of excellence than another ; but it does not follow that our single talent may not be in a state of improvement till the very end of life.

Consider, then, that it must be of vast importance to those who are verging to-



wards the period of old age, to be able to lay hold of something within themselves which they can carry along with them — something which will be a resource and comfort to them under the languor and tediousness of life's decay. The reflection of a life spent in just and honourable actions is a source of very great comfort in old age; but God has not formed man to derive his sole happiness, in any stage of life, either from meditating on the past, or anticipating the future. The most peevish old men I have ever known were such as had earned fame by some insulated action, and who had nothing else to depend on. They were obliged to draw constantly from the same stock, till the world began to conceive that they were bankrupt, and they were daily disappointed in the respect to which they thought themselves entitled. Be assured, therefore, that a happy and respectable old age must have something to shew as well as to relate. We must see what the

men are, as well as hear what they have been. I know nothing better, then, under the sun, than still to be doing with our hand what our hand findeth to do, and always to be busily employed in such work as suits our years, even when we are approaching the last bourn of all the human race, beyond which there is neither knowledge nor device; and by persevering in this, none of us *shall bring down our grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.*

It is not to be expected that a man labouring under a load of years, and constantly shewing that he is unable to bear it, can be a good companion to the young, the giddy, and the volatile. It is in vain to look for sympathy or respect where there is so much dissimilarity both in temper and years. We old men look on the actions of the young as foolish, and their pursuits as frivolous; while they consider our maxims as tinctured more with the peevishness than the wisdom of

age. For this very reason I like to make friends and companions of those who are forty years my juniors. I thus renew the youth of my mind, and have attachments growing upon me as my old friends drop away. I try to make young men be in love with old age before they arrive at it, and shew them that happiness and hilarity are not confined to the young. I also find many occasions of infusing the experience of age under the guise of equality; for, unless piqued by insolence or vulgarity, I never in conversation set myself above the humblest individual.

After all, I do not see why young people should not be entertained, nor do I believe they are at all incapable of being entertained, with the conversation and gaiety of an old man. When I make them forget my age, I forget it also myself. I account it an essential duty, and I am sure it is a source of great happiness, to break down, as much as possible, the jealousies which are apt to subsist

between the young and the old. They are afraid of our peevishness, and we are afraid of their frivolity. But let us always be satisfied that we meet on equal terms, and then they will love our cheerfulness, they will be flattered by our attentions, they will attain at an easy rate the experience which has cost us dear, and perhaps acquire a more sedate and manly character by the apothegms of age.

I advise every man advanced in age, therefore, to begin now and continue on, however old, this happy expedient of stepping back to the scenes which you have left, and mingling occasionally with the enchanting circles of innocence and youth, especially if you have any thing in your countenance or manners which invites all the young people of the families in which you visit to flock about you, hang about you, and use every familiarity with you. This is delightful, and an infallibly good sign of an old man ; for it is

a curious fact, that children are the best judges of character at first sight in the world. There is an old Scots proverb, "They're never cannie that dogs an' bairns dinna like;" and there is not a more true one in the whole collection. "Let no such man be trusted."

No man needs to fear the tediousness and insipidity of old age, provided his soul be kept in proper subjection to the will of his Creator. I am often surprised at seeing decent, respectable old men incessantly amused with trifling games, repeated almost in the same manner for a thousand times. I am addicted to some of these myself; but at that I do not wonder; for there is a principle in my constitution that requires constant excitement.

The book of nature, and especially those pages of it in which the human mind is delineated in its various attitudes and exertions, is the choicest study of man at any period of his life. It is good

for us to know ourselves ; but the minds of other men are a sort of mirror which reflects our own image ; and you will always find, that as you know other men more, you will be the better acquainted with yourself. Add to this, that when we have advanced to a certain period of life, our minds may be grown to their full size ; and though we do our best in retaining and polishing what we have collected, or in substituting the results of the understanding in the room of the force and play of the fancy, yet we must confess that, with respect to some powers of our mind, we are a little on the decline. In this stage, if a man seclude himself wholly from the world, his understanding will grow rigid, his philosophy antiquated, and his maxims and expressions quite unfashionable. Let us, then, live in the world while we are in it ; for it is better to keep pace with the times ; and, since we have always one door by which we can return to the



world, why shut it against ourselves for ever ?

Old men generally complain of the difficulty of making new friends : this is a great calamity, as it happens at a time when their old companions are daily disappearing, and when they are most in need of a succession of new ones. Perhaps, too, there may often be a little selfishness in this complaint, as the deaths of our contemporaries is a warning to ourselves. I know, indeed, of no friendship stronger than that which has grown with our years, and brings up in its associations all the fond recollections of our infancy and youth. But we must submit to such a separation ; and philosophy can give us no wiser instruction than that which teaches us to gain the love and respect of others, when we lose those who are dear and valuable. Providence has also, in our transitory state, wisely contrived a remedy for this disease of old age, if we choose, when we are young men, to avail

ourselves of it. We may so connect ourselves with the world as to have the fair prospect of dear and tender relations to fill the place of our departed friends, and to come with claims on us which will keep alive the best feelings of our nature, and excite our exertions and industry to the last period of our lives. This, with the fear of God always before our eyes, and a humble confidence in his mercy, will keep our old hearts perfectly at ease, and our grey hairs shall sink down into the grave in peace.

But of this we may rest assured, that there is no period of this life free from its peculiar cares and distresses. There is a portion of calamity allotted to men in all the stages of this probationary journey — this first stage on the road of immortality. When we contemplate old age at a distance, and see our seniors tottering under its burdens and cares, we are apt to say they have a double portion; but



we suppose many things in their situation which they do not feel; we paint the distress of old age with the vigour and fancy of youth. Does any one believe that an old man thinks of the shortness and uncertainty of his few remaining years with as much seriousness as his friends around him? It is quite the contrary. The hope of life is increased with our weakness, and that hope is never extinguished until the bitterness of death is past. Death is less feared as we proceed in the voyage, until a certain age, when we get much more frightened and careful of ourselves than the young are. Still death does not appear to come any nigher to our doors, which is another wise provision of Providence for man's earthly happiness; and the truth is, that in this precarious state of existence the danger is nearly equal to us all. Providence has given us blessings peculiar to every period of life; and there is no stage of our ex-

istence in which the real calamities of life are more concealed from our view, or less felt, than in old age.

My design in all this is to reconcile my younger brethren of the human race to a state to which they are all fast approaching, and which appears terrible to them only because they have no experience of it. But while I unveil the mysteries of our comfort, I would by no means paint old age as absolutely a state of rest from the cares of life, or as bringing certain and unmixed happiness to all who arrive at it. It is enough if I convince you that it is not what it seems to be. Were I to do more, I might carry you to the utmost verge of life with the idea of happiness which you could never obtain, whilst I did not prepare you for what you may enjoy.

Remember, then, that your pursuits in the vigour of life determine, in almost all cases, the happiness of your declining years. A man may be old without health,

or wisdom, or independence, or friends; and when he is so he will not easily procure those blessings.

It is only by regular exercise and temperance that a man can acquire that constitution that will wear off the depredations of time to the last. By daily additions to his knowledge he will acquire that strength of mind which will give the full possession of his stores for a long time after he is incapable of increasing them. He has to guard against being overtaken with old age and with want at the same time; and surely if God shall enable him to advance farther into the vale of years than his companions who began the journey with him, there is no harm in his cherishing those dispositions of mind which will gain him the respect and good-will of those who set out a few years after him. Let every man attend to these instructions, if he wishes to attain a happy old age; and if he chooses to obey them he will have the advantage

of enjoying more happiness from this day forward than he can have by following any other course. A vigorous constitution, strength of mind, and agreeable manners, not only make old age comfortable, but in the acquisition of them a man has infinitely higher satisfaction than is ever dreamed of by the effeminate and licentious part of mankind. An old man of this character appreciates full well the common maxim, that virtue is its own reward. He looks back on the sunshine of a well-spent life, and feels the advantage of his temperance and virtues in the health of body and soundness of mind which he enjoys.

If we are at no pains to prepare ourselves for advanced years, we are in danger of growing insipid, and of being neglected at that period of life when soothing and attention are most necessary. We see many instances of men outliving their usefulness, neglected by their friends, and complaining bitterly of that neglect. This

will ever happen when the disease of old age is not endured with meekness and cheerfulness. Let us not demand the sympathy of the world for a disease of which there is no hope, but let us at all events endeavour to deserve their admiration and love; for *why should you bring down your grey hairs with sorrow to the grave?*

I know you will say, long before reaching this point, that this man of the mountains is unequal to the task he has assumed; for what knows he of life or manners? You are wrong: we shepherds find

“Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,  
Sermons in stones, and good in every thing.”

And were it not that a dear and esteemed friend is at the head of moral philosophy in this country, I could so exhaust the subject that it should no more be taken up or handled here or elsewhere; and I shall conclude this discourse by one po-

tent piece of advice, which will convince every person who reads it how well I see into human nature ; and it is this :

Above all things on earth avoid the error too common of giving up your fortune, and the necessary independence of your character, till you part with your life. Let no misplaced love to your dearest friends, nor even to your children, prevail on you to do this ; else you shall assuredly shed the tear and rue the deed. It is better to be deceived by the flattering attentions of those who expect something from you, than to be neglected by those who think you past the use of living. Old men are often deceived into this conduct by their fondness and folly, and it never fails to embitter their remaining days. They absurdly imagine that affection pulls as strongly on the side of youth as on that of age ; and nothing can convince them of the law of nature on this point except the trial. I adjure every man, especially such whose means

of subsistence and exertions are linked together, never to give up his power of superintendency and direction as long as he is able to act, even though not with his usual vigour. Unless from severe sickness or mental derangement, I cannot suppose any person unfit to direct the business of his own family; why, then, should he reduce himself to a situation in which he may be jealous of encroachment, or in which those about him may think that he is so. The man who does this is sure to *bring down his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.*

## SERMON II.

## YOUNG WOMEN.

“ Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched-forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet. \* \* \* In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls and their round tires like the moon, the chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, the bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the ear-rings, the rings, and the nose-jewels, the changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping-pins, the glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the vails.”

THIS is a most extraordinary enumeration of our evangelical prophet's. I have always thought that the present age overtopped all former ones in emulation for fine dresses and ornaments of every de-



scription; but I have been wrong; for what are the most splendid dresses in Europe compared with those of the Hebrew ladies? Isaiah was a shepherd, and the son of a shepherd; but, like others of his class, he has had an eye to the comely daughters of his people, and, as appears from other parts of his writings, noted well both what was becoming and what was ridiculous. I shall therefore take advantage of the prophet's description of the fantastic dresses of the daughters of Jerusalem to point out a few failings in the characters of my beloved young countrywomen, and recommend some duties which, if they attend to, they will be the better and happier as long as they live. I know they will smile at this presumption, and say one to another that age has not cured the shepherd of his inherent vanity. But they should remember, that my years and separation from the world give me a right not only to speak my mind freely to the young and

giddy, but also the power of looking at the charms of the loveliest of women with a steadier and more discriminating eye than those can do who are overpowered with them and flatter them. I by that means possess a darkened glass through which I can look at the sun without being dazzled by the beams which conceal his dark spots. At all events, what is so well meant can never be taken amiss.

I must begin by disclosing to you the main fountain from whence all your errors and failings derive their source : it is a false and defective education. It is peculiarly unfortunate for you that at an early period of life the qualities which make you agreeable are quite of a different kind from those which are afterwards necessary to the discharge of your most important duties. The period of the few years between the girl and the woman is the most important one of your whole life : it is that period which frequently gives the character its peculiar tone and bias ; for though

you are prohibited, by the custom of the world, from acting a shining part, yet you have room to indulge in the liveliness which ends in the various arts which end in coquetry, or in the frivolity which ends in nothing. You dare not even let the little genuine information you have appear, for you know it would be regarded as affectation.

In short, your whole mode of education is unpropitious to future happiness. You are called to act a new part before you can possibly have secured one of the necessary qualifications for it; and at the same time there is something in the giddiness of seventeen which promises you approbation, though you may not deserve it. If a blunt man may use a plain expression to you, it is owing to the attentions of this important period that we find so many beautiful and agreeable women more ignorant than they should be. Their power of pleasing begins at an early age, and they cultivate no other acquirements

than those by which they made their first approaches to estimation. The approbation of the world is all that they value; and the only difference between the girl and the woman is a little difference in stature, and perhaps comeliness of form.

Now I appeal to yourselves if this frivolous mode of education is either preparing you for happiness in this life or that which is to come? The sole motive inculcated on a young woman, and that exclusive of all others, is that she shall make herself acceptable and agreeable to the circle around her. Her happiness and success in life are represented to her as depending more on the power of pleasing than any other qualification, not excepting the approbation of the wise and the good. Consequently she becomes agreeable more than prudent, and possesses a greater command of temper than exercise of understanding; and, what is more, this notorious defect in education has more influence on beautiful women

than on those of a more ordinary appearance. The former are more exposed to those attentions and flatteries which destroy them, and the latter enjoy the important advantage of applying their minds at an early period to those studies which the others cannot have time to think of until they are incapable of pursuing them. A few young women of prudence and foresight will occasionally attend to those concerns fitting them for the duties of a wife and mother, but, alas, how few! Now, consider with yourselves how a man could build a house, make a coat or a pair of shoes, without ever having tried it before. What a bungling business he would make of either! you will say. A hundred for one of you in the higher ranks of life place yourselves in the same situation the first fair opportunity that offers.

My purpose now is to address such young women who, in consequence of fine persons and engaging manners, are

in the greatest danger in their progress through early life. I am so much afraid of flattery and vanity combined, that I never see a beautiful young lady exposed to them, that I am not in pain for her lest they should triumph over her prudence and understanding. Let such take warning. A prudent general should be on his guard, although danger is not apparent.

I shall suppose you, then, accustomed from your infancy to yield implicit obedience to the best of mothers, and to listen to her as to an oracle of undisputed authority; that she has had the art of forming the minds of her children to submission, without laying them under any restraint. If so, then you can probably hear the voice of approbation without having your vanity excited; but be not too sure, nor rashly conclude that you are so fully prepared as to be in no danger. It is much better to possess an inclination for further knowledge than

that liveliness of disposition which expresses every thing. There is an ingenuous frankness which I am far from condemning, which consists simply in shewing the mind as it is. It is the purity which has nothing to conceal, nothing to be ashamed of, nothing to counterfeit, and nothing to affect. This frankness in your tender and confiding sex is most amiable; but I request you to observe the difference between this charming frankness and that slight and petulant imitation of it which some girls affect, and remind one of the language of statesmen who boast of apparent openness while they have something material to conceal.

The frankness, then, which I recommend to you is that which displays your whole soul and character to every person you converse with. It must be a chastened and intelligent frankness which makes it manifest that reserve would injure you. Be free, therefore, in all

your conversation, whether with your friends or with strangers, not only because you have nothing to conceal, but because you have always something to learn from them. I am decidedly averse to all that assumed superiority of address which obliges a lady to shift her character, and act a part suited to the company in which she is placed. It is often not very easy to overcome this; and I have seen most sensible and accomplished young ladies terribly curbed and kept down by it. There is nothing for it but frankness and vivacity, which in a young lady will put down every stately barrier. Nothing great is expected from her, which makes her little sallies the more pleasant; and such a picture of happy cheerfulness cannot fail to be reflected even from the breast of a cynic. It is like music at a feast—the effect is so pleasing, although not lasting; it is a sweet fragrance on a passing breeze —



a savour of delight, which cheers and amends the heart.

On the other hand, liveliness without an improved understanding may place you in very dangerous circumstances. If you are mistress of one or two agreeable qualities, they expose you to constant flattery, which, if your strength of mind be not thoroughly able to resist, the consequences may be pernicious in the extreme. In such a case, your whole fortune of charms is in ready money, wholly at your own disposal, and soon expended. The vanity and presumption of beauty and youth persuade you that it is unnecessary to add to your stock. You thus pass onward to the sober duties of life with the petulance of girlish vivacity, and are sure to render yourself despised and neglected when the effect of your transitory arts of pleasing is no more.

It is hardly possible for one of my retired habits and sequestered life to

point out the very path you should follow, from your childhood up ; but I have been a close observer of nature for the few chances I have had, and I have always observed that in your case much, much indeed, depends on the mother, which leads to a laxity of education from one generation to another. What, for instance, can be more pernicious to young women than that their education should be so often conducted without an object ? They are compelled to attend to a course of flimsy studies which serve to dissipate their minds, and which can never be brought to any use in the future part of their lives. This, it is true, may partly be attributed to the conditions imposed on your sex, which prevent you from entering into any profession which requires great activity or deep learning ; and because you have little to do in the active scenes of life, it is, I suppose, understood that you have as little to learn.

I must now address you, for a single sentence, in the abstract.

At seventeen the education of a lady is thought to be complete. Let us consider what she has then attained. She can speak and even read the language of her country with grace and propriety; she has French and Italian — of what sort? only a few smatterings, to which the natural sweetness of her voice gives a prettiness as she recites the few sentences, or sings the few verses, of which she is mistress. She is taught to have command of all the most agreeable smiles; and her natural liveliness and flippancy are sometimes carefully adorned with something like sentiment. O, how delightful and how killing that is! Then the attitudes! What is to become of the hearts of all mankind? Ah, those are so graceful, so insinuating! — and which, added to the elegance of the dress, make the dear creatures quite irresistible. Thus

prepared, she is introduced into company to carry all before her by a *coup de main*.

Now, this is a true picture; you cannot deny it. But, my dear girls, consider the matter seriously. If you enter the field with such sanguinary designs, you rush into a scene of the utmost danger, and engage in a warfare where you must either speedily conquer or never. You employ only weapons which must do all their execution at the first onset. Time blunts them, and experience will not enable you to use them with more success; and then, should your enemy yield at discretion, are you sure that the arms which conquered him will keep him in subjection? I fear not. Something more substantial is wanting. You may gain the sanguine heart of a youthful lover by your outward graces, but it is only the soul within that can retain him.

These are subjects the consideration of which is of infinite consequence; and in attending to them as you ought to do,

you will have occasion to improve your understanding, to regulate your temper, and increase your humility. In the practice of virtues which will equally secure your respectability and your happiness, you will find objects worthy of your choice, and greatly preferable to the talent of exciting the envy of weak women, or the admiration of insipid and volatile men.

It is grievous to see a superior mind dissipated by the conversation of those who affect liveliness because they are deficient in understanding. The great majority of the fashionable female world are in this condition at a certain time of life; and it is difficult for any young lady of the same rank to escape the contamination. She is apt to become enamoured with manners which are apparently amiable and engaging, and which cost her little expense or trouble to acquire, and her mind is insensibly weakened by imitation.

I do not advise you, my young coun-

trywomen, to fly from the world, but I earnestly recommend it to your particular attention, never to allow your minds to sink below the tone and vigour which mark their natural strength. Be as gay and playful if you will as those who assume gaiety to conceal their weakness, but never cease at any period of life to increase your knowledge, and, by exercise, to improve the powers of your understanding.

Having now warned you to beware of the flippancy of your female associates, and of those who make liveliness compensate for the defects of their understanding, I must next give you a few hints concerning the books which you ought and ought not to peruse. The means of improvement in regard to your sex are chiefly reading and conversation. The first gives you knowledge, and the latter teaches you how to use it; and much circumspection is requisite in both cases. Now, I must confess that I am

seldom pleased with the books which I see in the hands of young ladies whom I esteem and for whose well-being I am anxious. These circulating libraries are ruin for you, as from them you get so much that is nothing but froth and fume. I can never help being pleased when I see one of my own volumes in a young lady's hand whom I like, and yet I cannot say very much for them either; only thus much I can say, that these dreamy stories about ghosts and apparitions and persecutions are not half so apt to poison the mind as those of another class which I shall describe. Ladies' novels, for instance, with the exception only of those of two at present living, are all composed in a false taste, and at the same time convey so little instruction, that it would be better for you never to open them. What benefit can a young mind receive from contemplating scenes which, though interesting, have neither nature nor probability to



recommend them? You may see, perhaps, virtue rewarded and vice punished; but while these necessary acts of justice are painted, you see nothing of the reality of life, none of the characters with which you are acquainted; and it is far from being a safe amusement for young ladies to have their feelings and imaginations wrought upon by the fictions of romance, even though the book should hold up nothing but the fairest sides of fair characters. The mind by these is apt to become too highly toned for the common incidents of life; and the readers of such works are apt to be wound up to such a pitch as to be precisely like those who never enjoy themselves save when they are under the influence of intoxication.

Another bad thing in these books is, that they always bring virtue into trying and critical situations, so that you must have the delineation of vice along with the other,—all its modes of attack, and the most insinuating infusion of its poi-



son. Vice cannot be exhibited in detestable colours when the intention of the author is to make resistance meritorious. Where there is no allurements, there is no temptation; and it too frequently happens that the worst character in the piece is the most engaging. It is even uniformly so with the greatest and most accomplished novelist that ever was born; and hence, in the mind of a young reader especially, all the distinctions between virtue and vice are broken down. Think, then, what mischief may be wrought in a youthful female mind by such pernicious representations of character. If the agreeable but wicked hero of the piece be reformed, there is a dangerous desire excited to make proselytes; and if he be punished, the tears which should have been shed for his guilt fall for the misfortunes of the guilty. I recommend, therefore, to your attention those works which give a real picture of such characters as have existed in the

world, and do exist, both for your profit and amusement ; for whenever your author loses sight of nature and probability, you lose all hold of him and interest in his work.

It is good to indulge in reading history; for though the incidents are often surprising, and such as one durst not exhibit in a novel, and likewise many of the characters above the capacity of ordinary readers to comprehend, it nevertheless has this to recommend it, that it gives a faithful and true picture of the passions which have agitated mankind, and the events which have resulted therefrom in real life, especially from the ambition of princes and the selfish intrigues of courtiers and flatterers. But in history, though we often see vice successful, it is never amiable ; and, from the nature of its composition, and the greatness of its objects, the series of events, the dignity of the actors, and the issue of all worldly events, which it does and must exhibit,

you will review lessons on human affairs well calculated to promote your knowledge and humility. There you see the rapid decay of all worldly grandeur, beauty, and ambition ; so that the whole of history, to a contemplative mind, is one huge *memento mori*—a good lesson still to keep before your eyes.

Romances, on the other hand, give a transient and false view of human life ; the figures are overcharged with colouring, the whole is intended to please, and there is nothing in the background to teach us that all is vanity. The personages of romance are indeed conducted through most difficult and distressing scenes ; their virtue is exposed to the greatest risks, while the art of the author must, at all events, preserve it from contamination. Many delicate sentiments may be introduced, and much heroic love displayed, and, when you least expect it, the seas, and interventions of all sorts, which a little while before seemed alto-

gether insurmountable, disappear at once ; the stratagems of rivals, and the opposition of parents, are all exhausted ; and the marriage of the hero and heroine closes the grand outrageous fiction.

Some of these works may be exceedingly amusing to you, though I confess they never were so to me ; but I maintain, that if you read such books, you will never be instructed. What are regarded as fine sentiments are of no use if arising out of unnatural and improbable adventures ; and I farther assure you, on the credit of a poet, that I never knew a young lady the better of her reading when she read for excitement alone. Never expect to be deceived into wisdom, nor to find it when you are not in direct search of it. The road lies through thickets of briers and thorns, and there are some steep ascents by the way of so hazardous a nature, that you require some resolution to carry you forward. But if you come immediately into mea-

dows of flowers, and follow the endless meandering of beautiful rivers, you have reason to fear that you have mistaken the road. But forget not this, that "wisdom is the principal thing: therefore get wisdom, and with all thy gettings get understanding." But in proving this, I might quote one half of the Proverbs of Solomon.

I entreat you, then, to read such books as may instruct more than amuse you. Accustom yourself to receive pleasure from the taste and good sense of the author, more than from the incidents he relates. Admire the thoughts which paint to you what you yourself should be, more than those which give you the possible situation of others; and, above all, permit me seriously to advise you to read those books only which are recommended and selected by those who have your well-being at heart, and never by those who may have any interest or selfish purpose in misleading you. It can be no

reproach to you, that in the vast number of books within your reach, neither your years nor experience enable you to make the most prudent choice. At no period of life is it safe to read a multitude of miscellaneous works; therefore you will act wisely, if you endeavour, by the advice of parents, pastors, or preceptors, to form your taste, so that you may be qualified for making your own selection before you become sole mistress of your actions.

It will be more useful for you to understand what you read than to remember it. Your mind may treasure up many things relating to useful knowledge by the aid of memory; but I would prefer that exercise of the understanding, which, if well improved, makes us master of the thoughts of the author, which enables us to relish them, and to see their full force and beauty as we go along. This exercise of the understanding is of great value. It is acquired by attention to



what you read, much more than by reading a great deal, and it gives you the power on all occasions of drawing from your own stock, instead of detailing the detached and ill-sorted opinions of others, from a memory which cannot be at all times correct. I know nothing of greater importance to a young woman than the power of thinking for herself. If your understanding be not disciplined to the task, it behoves you to strengthen it by making it act with precision and force on every book you read. If you derive no other advantage from this, it will at least keep you from quoting your father or your mother, or more probably Lord Byron or Anacreon Moore, as authorities for such wayward sentences as you may chance to detail from memory.

The same management and discretion of mind may be still more usefully employed in company; for you may always consider conversation as an extemporary book, wherein, without much order or

method, you may read the wit and common sense of your neighbours. It is a collection from many authors of delicate humour, of serious reflections, of interesting anecdotes, and sometimes of little narratives of common and domestic events. The art lies in mixing the ingredients in such a manner as to make each individual believe his taste has been consulted in the composition. Every person has a right to be satisfied with what he hears in the company of his friends, provided it be the sincere desire of the speaker to please every individual by what he says. I need not inform you, however, that there is a period of life at which a young lady may appear to be supposed too much in the light, if she shall force her sentiments into the current of general conversation. When they are perfectly correct, and even well-timed, there may still be a deficiency of that reserve and diffidence which should have taught her not to utter them. You will be able to judge of this by the forced



complaisance, and sometimes silence, of your hearers ; and you may lay it down as a general rule, that it is always time for you to cease speaking, when those you wish to please seem no longer disposed to listen to you.

Youth imposes this restraint on you, and during that period you may feel the inconvenience of it, and be ready to envy and blame those who have got the ear of the world for depriving you of the exercise of your tongue. But, depend on it, it is the safest course for you to listen more than speak ; it is so easy for young persons in their inexperience to go wrong, if they indulge themselves too much in speaking in company. The liveliness of your imagination may so easily mislead your judgment, that you may acquire the habit of connecting sentences without that precise connexion of thought which is essential to good conversation, and may go on to the end of your life tiring your companions with common

place observations, merely because you were taught to speak, before you were able to understand. I do not retract what I have formerly said to you concerning that open frankness which is so becoming in every character and at every period of life; but I request you to consider, that this frankness consists in having nothing to conceal, not in uttering sentiments incongruous to your years, or inconsistent with good sense and an improved understanding.

I have often noted, that young ladies endeavour to shine in conversation long before they are capable of making themselves agreeable in mixed company of all ages. They are often compelled to make a bold stroke, and expose some striking peculiarity, which is far from being the most congenial quality of their young minds. It is not, perhaps, unsuitable to the gay moments of social intercourse to intersperse something of the ludicrous; and there are some characters who may

be considered as a seasoning to the feast of conversation; but by no means rest your introduction to good company on the display of any oddity, however agreeable you may suppose it to be to them. In early life it is unsafe to indulge in the ludicrous of any sort, until you have won by the gentleness, innocence, and simplicity of your character. You must be beloved for your good qualities, before you attempt to be admired for your shining ones.

If you attend to these particulars, delivered to you in sincerity and love, your qualities will be of such a nature as to make you estimable in any situation or in any company. Gentleness and modesty are equally attractive to the high and the low, to the learned and the unlearned. In possessing what is unassuming and amiable, you interfere with no person's claims, and you interrupt the progress of no person's vanity. You secure the silence of the severe, and the approbation of the worthy. Be assured, then,

that you may make yourself very agreeable to your friends and associates, although you are not too eager, on your entrance into life, of displaying the shining qualities you possess. I have seen teasing and disagreeable effects produced by the ambition of young people to shine where they should have been listening for instruction. Sometimes they acquire a degree of irrecoverable petulance by the easy victories which they obtain over modest merit. Depend on it, every wise person feels sensibly disappointed when the vanity or forwardness of a young, inexperienced person of either sex deprives him of the instructions of the learned or gifted. What is still more serious, this petulance becomes incorrigible; the reward of it also is sure to be the reserve of your friends, and the ultimate consequence is likely to be an exclusion from every select meeting where people meet to enjoy free and rational conversation. Be it your great care, then, always to

bring your share of information and good sense to the feast of reason, which, accompanied with modesty, will insure you a welcome reception, and the approbation of the wise and good.

Keep this, then, in remembrance, that in conversation, as in reading, you must raise your understanding to be equal to what you hear. Use your endeavour to have that distinct perception of every sentence uttered in company, which will give your mind the precise idea of the person who uttered it. A quick apprehension will make you a more agreeable companion than a smart reply. That little degree of vanity which enters into the composition of every man of learning and genius, however modest, is more flattered by being distinctly understood than well answered. Avoid, therefore, that disagreeable absence of manner and vacancy of countenance, when you listen to your seniors; for they are the indications of a weak and conceited mind.

Shew, at least, that desire to understand them, which will make them adapt their observations to your capacity. If you wish to please your friends by your conversation, you must first learn to be pleased with theirs. Never allow yourself to be hurried away by the dangerous desire of speaking when you ought to be silent; but remember, there is an eloquent silence which displays the intelligence as well as the modesty of a young lady. First improve your mind, and then display its powers.

I have indited nothing as yet to you regarding your religious duties, and shall do it very shortly. My first great injunction, then, is, **KEEP THE SABBATH.** Do not be seen flying about with gentlemen in gigs and carriages, nor walking and giggling in the fields; for such behaviour is lightsome, and highly disreputable. Attend Divine service once every Sunday at least, even though your minister should be *a bore*, as too many of



them are, repeating the same monotonous sentences from day to day, and from year to year. Still, it is your duty to attend Divine worship, to join in praise and prayer with the community of Christians to whom you belong, and listen, reverently and attentively, to the word preached, as you know not whence a blessing may come, or when it may light.

But as the attendance on Divine service takes up but a small portion of the day, in directing your studies for the remainder of it I am rather at a loss. I cannot insist on your reading of sermons, not even my own, for I never could do it myself, except Sterne's and Boston's, the two greatest opposites in nature. The BIBLE is by far the most inexhaustible book in the world, even laying aside its Divine origin altogether. For its great antiquity, simplicity of narrative, splendour of poetry, and wise and holy injunctions, there is no work once to be compared with it; therefore, by all means, read your Bible,

and attend to all the ordinances of Christianity; for it is beautiful and becoming to see a young person attending reverently upon these, and can scarcely fail to make her more acceptable both with God and man. Therefore attend diligently on the ordinances of religion, and read your Bible,—all save the book of Leviticus, which I always make my own children leave out. The study of the Jewish ceremonial law can be of no benefit to any one, but least of all to a young lady. I wish that book had been cancelled from the Holy Scriptures; for there are many of the injunctions so disgusting, that they cannot be read even by men.

I believe I may be singular in this idea, but I have always thought it would be best for young women to read the New Testament before the Old one. In youth, their minds are like wax softened by the fire, and ready to take any impression; and surely the Gospels, containing the pure, unblamable, and holy life of



our Saviour, his love for our fallen race, sufferings, death, and resurrection, must leave an impression on their tender minds never to be effaced. They can then read the history of the Jews, and the prophecies concerning Him who was to come afterwards, and wonder at their precise and extraordinary fulfilment.

In attendance on all the ordinances of religion, be sure that your dress be plain and modest. Avoid by all means such ridiculous ornaments as the prophet describes at the beginning of this essay. Lay these aside for balls and assemblies, and there dazzle as much as you like; but in the house of God let always modesty of carriage, and decency of deportment and dress, prevail. I shall conclude this address with the beautiful advice of the wise man, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth."

## SERMON III.

## GOOD BREEDING.

“ A wholesome tongue is a tree of life ; but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit.”

WHEN the great moral philosopher of Israel dictated this, it is evident that he alluded to our daily conversation ; one of those constant mental ingredients which contribute so much to the happiness or misery of a family or community. I shall therefore dedicate this discourse solely to the best means of improving ourselves in that, the most useful of all accomplishments.

The first rule, then, in conversation is to please the people with whom it is your lot to converse. This to a young person appears a much more difficult task than it really is. At the period of life at which I write this, and I have many brethren of mankind of the same age, or thereabouts,

we think the young are more agreeable when they discover an ingenuous and modest disposition, than when they endeavour to display the powers of their understanding. It frequently happens, however, in both sexes, during the period between youth and maturity, that there is a strong desire to speak, where the previous desire of pleasing has not been attended to. I have seen many young men positively dogmatical, when they ought to have been receiving instruction. But it should be considered, that the faculty of conversation is different from the use of speech. We may have the gift of tongues without charity, which is nothing; but conversation is that simple and good-natured eloquence which pleases every one.

The great error of young men is to overrate their talents, as well as to mistake the application of them. We may be assured that every appearance of conceit is correspondent with some weakness of intellect. When a man is astonished

at what he knows, it may be a proof that he has stood on the brink of science ; but it is also a proof that he has not discovered it to be boundless and unfathomable. The ignorance of such a person makes him loquacious and opinionative, because he has never known what it was to be beyond his depth.

Now, the difficulty of pleasing the people we converse with consists in not knowing what will please them ; and the mistakes we make consist in this radical defect, that our principal aim in conversation is to please ourselves. I remember, when I was a young man, I was told by a minister of the Gospel, a grave and venerable man, who had preached long, both in England and Scotland, that to please my companions and associates, I had nothing more to do than to desire and wish to do it. This is a just maxim in itself, but one which I did not then understand ; for I found, that though I had the desire, I could not discover that my

attempts were at all successful. Instead of that, my desire of pleasing was so ardent, that it often excited a smile at my absurdity and simplicity. Sir Walter Scott was accustomed very often to check my loquacity, and call for a song instead ; and I have frequently seen him do the same with young men ; for it was not age that I wanted, but experience. He had the true art of conversation. He was always amusing and instructive ; and he never put any one out of countenance, but was sure to bring a modest man forward. Professor Wilson's conversation is richer and more brilliant ; but then he takes sulky fits. If there be any body in the company whom he does not like, the party will not get much out of him for that night ; his eyes gleam like those of a dragon ; and, as a poet says of him, (Wordsworth, I think,) " he utters a short hem ! at every pause ; but further ventures not." The truth is, that the vivacity of youth must be tempered, the character must be esta-

blished, and the means of pleasing understood, before the desire to please becomes an infallible rule in conversation. Every person soon feels disgusted with one whose whole aim is to make him laugh.

It is not the power of saying a great deal, or even of saying a great deal in the very best manner, that can make us agreeable to the hearer. It may seem paradoxical, yet it is true, that if we succeed, we must not profusely lavish the rules of the art. Though we are obliged, out of respect for female talents, to listen respectfully to Mrs. G—, Miss B—, and Mrs. S—, with mute acquiescence, they are nevertheless very tedious companions: Mrs. J—, again, is quite the reverse; I would take her as a model of a literary lady.

Whenever the desire of victory is the motive of a colloquial combatant, the charms of easy and agreeable conversation are at an end. We do not meet with our friends to fight a battle, but to

be pleased and instructed. Every kind of wrangling ought to be excluded from the intercourse of friends, and the entertainer or president of a company ought to check it, at whatever expense of chagrin to the aggressors.

The best rebuke that I ever heard of this sort, or ever shall hear again, was given by the late Dr. Barclay, of Edinburgh. He was a gentleman of great suavity and mildness of disposition, and hated all kind of wrangling. So there was one day he had four other professors, five college students of the first-rate talents, and myself, to dine with him. After the Doctor's wine began to operate a little, the young men contradicted their preceptors in almost every thing, always provoking a dispute. The seniors smiled at the young men's absurdity, and dropped the subjects. But at length two of them fastened on each other, an Englishman and an Irishman, and disputed so violently, that all social conversation was



completely obstructed. It was about some point of moral philosophy, the decision of which did not signify a small pin; so their several arguments were utter nonsense. But at length, one of them, after uttering a most obstreperous sentence, came a blow on the table with his fist; on which Dr. Barclay's little terrier, that lay below it, got up, with a great bow-wow-wow! bow-wow-wow! bow-wow-wow! The Doctor gave it a gentle spurn, and, with a face of the utmost good-nature, said, "Haud your tongue, ye little stupid beast; I'm sure ye ken as little about it as ony o' them."

The reproof was successful; the gentlemen's faces both grew red, but one of them joined in the laugh till the tears ran down his cheeks. There was no more disputing that night.

There was another time, in the city of London, that I was invited to dine with a gentleman, with whom Allan Cunningham and I had several times been very



happy. Before dinner, he took me aside, and said, "I have invited a Captain Selby to meet you to-night; he has been very much abroad, and his information is boundless; but he has a singular disposition to contradict every thing that is advanced by any other of the company; and then, he is so dogmatical, that he will not yield his point on any consideration. If I could get him and Mr. Walker, your friend, pitted together, we should have some fine fun, and I should give them both a rebuke which they never would forget."

Accordingly, at dinner he placed Captain Selby and Mr. Walker right over against one another, as people do two cocks which they wish to fight. At a late hour, about the time when we should have retired to coffee, the two combatants had engaged in a most desperate dispute about the antiquity of an English family, compared with that of the other disputant's own. Our first moments of

enjoyment were scarcely interrupted by them, except by some looks of dissatisfaction and superiority at the trifling manner in which we were employed. At length, however, their peculiar temper broke out. Their violence bore down every attempt to change the subject, and prevented them from discovering the disconcerted looks of the company. This was the signal for the execution of Mr. H—t's project. On ringing of the bell gently and unperceived, a servant appeared to tell one of the combatants that a stranger in the next room requested to speak with him for a few minutes. The servant led him a long circular route; and in the mean time, another servant came in and asked the other disputant the same request. Consequently, they entered both at the same instant, at different doors, into the drawing-room; they bowed respectfully to one other. They both at once, however, perceived the whole force of the rebuke, and were going to sneak

off at their respective doors, when the whole party broke in on them, and by their raillery and merriment made them confess both the justice and pleasantry of Mr. H—t's device. I never saw two gentlemen more obliging and complimentary to one another than these two were during the remainder of the evening.

Above all things, avoid the tricks, grimaces, and sentiments, which disgust you in others. If you find that an impetuous carriage, excessive talking, sly insinuations, and the thousand methods of dragging in the subjects dearest to themselves, displease us in our acquaintances, we may believe that the same propensities in us will be disagreeable to them. And if we were not blinded by self-love, our sufferings would teach us wisdom. In this article of social intercourse there seems to be a sort of commerce, or bartering of sentiment, in which we give away what pleases us, it being understood that we receive an equal quantity of what

pleases our neighbours. Generosity, too, is here inverted; for he is most amiable who, for the smallest compensation, is disposed to carry away the largest share.

You will often meet with friends who pretend to be intrusted with secrets and family affairs, and who set themselves up as a sort of general arbiters in all the concerns of their acquaintances: do not believe a word they say; it is all more from vanity, or perhaps malignity, than friendship; and always let subjects of a private nature be reserved for the ear of our friends, and never be introduced when we meet them in mixed companies; for such matters are not fitted for social and enlightened conversation.

The noblest distinction between man and the brutes is the power of forming ideas. We not only receive impressions from external objects, but we judge of the object from the impression. We treasure up our experience for future use. We combine and derive results of which

all the other animals on the face of the earth are incapable. The next to this in dignity and importance, is the power of communicating our ideas. Nothing has ever appeared more wonderful to me than that, by habit, the sounds of words, which have no relation to the sense, should give me an exact picture of another man's mind, and make me acquainted with subjects of which I had never thought before. We cannot easily believe that our ideas partake of material substance: it is unnatural and absurd to say, that thin and invisible coats are perpetually flying off from the bodies which impress and act on our minds. The images which we retain of mountains, and houses, and trees, when they are out of our sight, have as little connexion with these natural objects as our bodies have with our spirits; and yet it is true, that by a little modulation of air, and by the use of our organs in making a few sounds with letters and words, we can paint on the mind of our

friend nearly the same impressions which we ourselves have received. All this is the contrivance of Infinite Wisdom, and to be accounted for with more difficulty than the immediate communication of souls, where no interruption of body intervenes to make this contrivance necessary.

Next to the perpetual wrangler, who endeavours to force truth on you by the strength of his lungs and incessant talking—next to him, I say, in the art of interrupting the pleasure of social intercourse, is the person who, by his false discernment, or affectation of purity, is sure to see something improper in almost every thing that is said, and every publication that is mentioned. This is dreadfully disgusting. I would not sit in company with a lady who mentioned the term *indelicate*; for it shows that she has been on the hunt after such expressions, and that she has treasured up for such in her mind, what was only meant for inno-



cent pleasantries. There is no better proof of a weak understanding than to hear a man always descanting on trifles and niceties, which are really not worth speaking about. Such a man, being himself incapable of true wit and pleasantry, imagines that he contributes to the fund of general entertainment, by exposing every thing which he conceives to be false or erroneous. This is to be making rules when we should be putting them in practice, and to destroy pleasure by our disquisitions on it. Such men push themselves into company, one would think, for no other purpose than to mould the countenances of other men into the shades of dulness and formality. They attempt by their stateliness to give you a high opinion of their wisdom; and by the gravity of their features and deportment to throw a damp on all sort of freedom and hilarity. Such men produce the same effects in mixed companies as the cynic does on other men's opinions; and I have no hesi-

tation in saying to both, that if they do not meet their friends with a disposition to be pleased, they would be wiser to stay away. What necessity do they lie under to be seeking food for their spleen where every body else is in pursuit of happiness? I do not believe that there is in human shape a character who associates with his fellow-creatures solely for the purpose of destroying their happiness. In the cases I am describing, there are other motives, which seem to proceed principally from malice. The pride of rank, or of understanding, may lurk under the grave countenance; and the vanity of displaying excellence may produce severe and contradictory remarks: but such people may be assured, that if they cannot lay aside these defects in their character, they had better never mingle in the society of their friends, for they will only render themselves more and more disagreeable.

I am sorry to make the remark, but



for the sake of truth must do it, that I have generally found the ministers of the gospel most at fault in this respect. They are so accustomed to harangue others without any contradiction, that when they come into mixed societies, they cannot bear it, and too frequently grow dogmatical. I have the greatest veneration for that class of society, but must caution them against that too general failing. There are two extremes always to be carefully avoided; levity, which is too forward to please; and severity, which imposes unnecessary restraint. I have met with many almost intolerant instances of this in Scotland; and isolated country clergymen are more apt to be affected by this failing than those of a great city. In the latter, the constant friction of society has ground off all the asperities; and yet I know of some almost unbrookable instances of this character in Edinburgh, and of first-rate gentlemen too.

I found the society of London quite

different; and how it should have happened with me, I know not; for I mixed freely with all sorts of respectable society; but I never met with an overweening character, either among the clergy or laity. Croly is, perhaps, a little too apt to take the lead in conversation; but then he is so exceedingly intelligent, that one is always both pleased and edified. Hood, from whom I expected a continued volley of wit, is a modest, retiring character. Reynolds more brilliant. Hook altogether inimitable, either for fun or drinking. Martin as simple in his manners as a shepherd's boy. Cruikshanks stately and solemn. But I could go over a thousand in the same way, in most of whom I was disappointed, though often most agreeably. Among the nobility and gentry I felt myself most at home, and most at my ease of all. There was no straining for superiority there. Every gentleman and lady came apparently to be pleased, and they were pleased with every thing,

whether said or sung. The impression left on my mind by mingling with the first society of London, is that of perfection, and what I would just wish society to be.

But this is all extraneous matter—I must return to general principles; and it being quite evident that every man is not fitted for conducting conversation, yet I aver, that it is our own faults if we are not able to enjoy it. It is to this point, if our object be to please ourselves and associates, that we should direct our attention. The display of superior talents excites envy. You never see professional men succeed in conversation, unless they possess great modesty in speaking of their own profession. And even those who have a pleasant flow of genuine humour, will not find channels for it in every company; but every man or woman may possess, if they choose, the power and capacity of being pleased, and this will fit them for all kinds of innocent conversa-

tion. We must have the power of attending, as well as of speaking; and the former is of infinitely more importance than the latter; because by speaking, suppose in the very best manner, we discover the extent of our understanding, and sometimes of our vanity; but by hearing as we ought to do, we discover our cheerfulness and humility, without the imputation of assumption or vanity.

It is a fact, however it may be received, that the fair sex excel more in conversation than ours. I do not intend to flatter the women, for I have flattered them too much already, nor will I pretend to say that they speak less; but the beauty of their conversation is, that they listen to and hear a great deal more. They have some way an acuteness of perception, which enables them to follow the most rapid discourse, and a superiority of candour which prevents them from misrepresenting it. They never wrangle from slowness of apprehension, nor for

the purpose of misleading or perplexing their hearers; and, therefore, all men of superior minds have preferred the conversation of the fair sex to that of their own. Were they to add a competent knowledge of all proper colloquial subjects, they would enchant mankind still more; and, God knows, their power over us is sufficient already!

But, for all their faults, we must confess that nature has fitted women for conversation in a superior degree to our own sex. Their minds are more refined and delicate than ours, their imaginations more vivid, and their expressions more at command. When sweetness and modesty are joined to intelligence, the charms of their conversation are irresistible. I, therefore, earnestly wish and pray that the ladies, who have so much power over the whole progress of society, and can model mankind as they please, would take the pains to model some plan of national solidity. I assure them, I am in earnest.

At present they justly and properly take the lead in all conversations, and are uniformly listened to with respect, and the reverence with which we approach them is rather incompatible with that playfulness which we are obliged to assume to humour them, by conforming to their manner, of which we are incapable.

I must always regard the society of London as the pink of what I have seen in the world. I met with most of the literary ladies, and confess that I liked them better than the blue-stockings of Edinburgh. Their general information is not superior to that of their northern sisters, perhaps it may be said that it is less determined; but, then, they never assume so much. The society of London that I mixed with is, as I have said before, just such a model as I would always desire to see. There was no wrangling; none whatever; not even on political creeds. They intermixed all in the most perfect harmony; and if such a thing as the



different sides chanced to be mentioned, it was by way of joke. Mr. Holmes was, however, a very arbitrary gentleman among them, but a fellow of infinite good-humour.

But to return to the power of women in general, which, in society highly polished, may be said to be omnipotent, therefore they must take the lead in reforming it. There are just two things to be attained, which will sufficiently qualify them for this arduous task of improving mankind. First, they must improve themselves, and then must studiously honour and distinguish men of learning, virtue, and genius. The first would make the fops acquire some sort of learning in their own defence; and the second would make them ashamed of themselves, if such a thing were possible.

The ladies have, moreover, the advantage of going wherever their fancy leads them, with little danger of being envied or affronted. A man of learning is re-

sponsible for his opinions, and is generally as positive as he is learned. But the fair sex have the power of dressing science in her gayest robes, of laughing us into wisdom, and conquering us when seeming to yield. It is, indeed, but a little way that the most enlightened of the human race can descend into the mysteries of nature and providence which surround them ; yet, if we do not render ourselves incapable by our carelessness, a certain degree of knowledge on all subjects is nearly competent to all. There are, then, common grounds on which, as rational creatures, we daily meet. How useful and how improving might our conversation be rendered ! We might discuss, in the first place, the topics on which every man's senses give him sufficient information.

I have been often amused at the general topics of conversation discussed by men respectable in life. The quarter from which the wind blows, and how long



it has travelled on the same current, and the effects it has on the flocks, fields, and cattle, is a grand and never-ending subject, though all know it alike well. Then the different dishes and wines are to be discussed, and, above all things, the sauces. O, it is amazing what grand discoveries have been made in these ! I once heard a reverend professor assert, that he had of late made a very important discovery. What was it, think you ? That beet radish made a pickle greatly superior to the radishes or cabbage of Savoy !

This, to be sure, is all very trivial ; but it is harmless, and may lead to deeper researches into the arcana of nature. It is, at all events, better than circulating slander and insinuations tending to mischief. The illiberal prejudices and ridiculous customs of the world, compel me to descant on such trifles, as they occur in all parties where business is not conducted, and where friendship dare not unbosom itself. But, alas ! what a pity

that reasonable creatures should eat and drink together to so little purpose ! It is one of the unaccountable characters of our nature, that in those companies where trifles form the principal topics of conversation, no man or woman will venture a wise or deep remark. We choose rather to appear what we are not, than fail in what we wish to be. But surely in all such parties the finer and more aërial portion of our constitution, the soul, ought to be gratified as well as the palate.

As I am obliged to draw my pictures from my own circumscribed observation, I am compelled reluctantly to confess, that I have often heard the ladies complain of the frivolity of our conversation ; and that where they expected the finest wheat, they found only chaff. They would be wiser to hold their tongues on this matter, as they themselves are often the cause of that frivolity ; and they little know what is said of them in certain situations. It is a pity there should be any

reason of complaint on either side ; for it is not because good sense is banished from among us, but because the two sexes are absurdly pleased mutually to converse together under a mask, until the whole becomes a scene of impertinence and folly, where the great contest seems to be, who shall best conceal their ignorance, and not display their knowledge. Hence vivacity is often substituted for wit, and pleasing trifles dressed out in the gaudiest colours ; and thus our intercourse with the world may amuse us for a while, but can yield us no solid or lasting advantage. Let the fair sex, then, be the first to pull off the mask themselves, and they will soon prevail on their acquaintances of the other sex to unmask also. It is their bounden duty to set the example ; for we are much more afraid of them than they are of us, and much more influenced by their manners than they are by ours. If once their general conduct be moulded into the form of advice,

it is irresistible. How lovely to see modesty mixed with learning, wit with good-nature, and a taste in dress with a taste for something of more intense value.

But if you find, that among your associates the disease is so inveterate as not to be cured by the example of the fair, the wise, and the good ; if folly shall continue to be predominant, clamour to overtop reason, and scandal triumph over decency ; then it is time to do as I have done ; to retire from the world, and in some obscure retreat, with as many friends as choose to follow you, try to seek wisdom in the shade, disencumbered of scoffers and evil-speakers ; for truly *a wholesome tongue is a tree of life ; but perverseness therein is a breach of the spirit.*

From my choice of the above text, it is manifest that I wish seriously all scandal to be banished from well-bred society. People of the higher walks of life, if ignorant, which they sometimes are, seem to be

most addicted to scandal. You would scarcely believe that the little tricks and failings of the peasantry are often minutely detailed at a great man's table. There is an elevation in rank which must be supported, either by dignity of character or by a comparison with the vulgar. There lies the fountain-head of their malevolent talk. But it is only an invidious rising on other men's defects ; a vain attempt to scramble over a wall of mud, in which you do no more than shew your ambition and foul your clothes.

Let me entreat, then, of every Christian and genteel community to check every attempt at the introduction of that vile ingredient into social conversation. What pleasure can it give to any rational being to hear that a man who is not present to defend himself, is suspected of a very wicked or ridiculous action ? Is it not most unfair to tell a story to a dozen of people, which cannot be told to the person most deeply interested ? And why

does one expose himself to the danger of circulating a lie? When a man or woman brandishes this weapon of mischief among their friends, it is a clear proof that they are unfit for the rational enjoyment of their company. There may be some present who will give full credit to the account, though, perhaps, the retailer may be the twentieth person from the original. This is stabbing a man behind his back; and for his own character's sake, no one should introduce topics of scandal and detraction. The heart that believes them is malicious, and the vanity that indulges in them is contemptible. Keep, therefore, the apothegm of the wise man always before your eyes and uppermost in your heart. *A wholesome tongue is a tree of life; but perverseness therein is a breach of the spirit.*

I have just one other observation to make before leaving this subject, and I am afraid it may be thought by many to come but ill from the pen of one who has concocted so many manifest, though amus-



ing falsehoods. It is religious conversation, of which I have as yet said nothing. Now, I never like to hear religion brought into a large company as matter of general conversation. It is a dangerous topic, and apt to be productive of more evil than good, there being so many scoffers and Deists in almost every community; and I have even heard some of the wildest blasphemy poured unblushingly and triumphantly forth. Therefore I would not have the mild and humble religion of Jesus even risked against such a battery. But, among friends, whose hearts and sentiments are known to each other, what can be so sweet or so advantageous as occasional conversation on the principles of our mutual belief, and the doctrines of grace and salvation? Suffer me, then, to detail a few of the advantages which, by the blessing of God, we are likely to enjoy by indulging in this blissful communication of sentiments, and abstracting ourselves from worldly concerns.

One great advantage, then, which the

fearers of God derive from conferring together, is growth and improvement in the spiritual life. The words we hear in conversation, especially from those we love, have a surprising influence on the turn of the mind, the feelings of the heart, and our behaviour in life. I have seen many instances, and I relate it with pleasure, that a simple hint hath raised and cherished devout affections, hath caught hold of a man when he was tottering on the verge of some foul transaction, and been the means of re-establishing him in virtue, and in a laudable course of action every way becoming a sincere Christian. I have known even a conversation held in a dream have a powerful effect on the heart in warning one from approaching evil. And I know that many a man hath felt the emotions of gratitude stir in his breast by being casually put in mind of God's great loving-kindness towards him. A single expression from those we esteem con-



cerning the excellency of our religion, and the surpassing love of Jesus for fallen and ruined mankind, or concerning the dignity, the reality, and the beauty of virtue, amidst all the corruption, confusion, and dissipation, which like a cloud of wrath hath overspread the world,—such a genial hint, I say, will seldom fall in vain. It awakens in the soul admiration and love to God; it kindles a warm desire in the hearer towards virtue and holiness, cherishing the same desire in the heart of the speaker. How often, too, hath soft persuasion pacified wrath and stemmed the impetuous tide of passion! How often hath it excited pity and commiseration, and allayed the boisterous intentions of revenge and cruelty, controlled a friend's criminal desires, made him alter his purpose, and preserve his innocence! How beautiful and forcible, then, are these words of the great King of Israel! They ought to be engraved on the tablet of every heart. *A*

*wholesome tongue is a tree of life; but perverseness therein is a breach of the spirit.*

I could quote many passages of holy writ to the same purport, not one of which is to be despised or neglected; such as, “A word fitly spoken, is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.” “The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened in sure places by the masters of the assemblies.” “Let, therefore, no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth; but that which is good to the use of edifying.” “Be ye filled with the spirit, speaking among yourselves mutually.” “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another.” All these are maxims bearing the same stamp, and from the very highest source.

Let us, then, endeavour to dispose ourselves to an exercise so salutary. We can never be at a loss for materials, having the whole Scriptures of truth before us. We may converse on the

failings and virtues of the patriarchs of old, and how the judgments and mercies of God were exercised toward them and their families. We may trace the history of the most wonderful people that ever inhabited the face of the globe, the prophecies concerning them, and their extraordinary fulfilment. All the prophecies concerning our Saviour, from the day that man first fell in Paradise, to that in which the Son of the Highest came in the likeness of sinful flesh to save us. Such communications can hardly fail to warm our hearts with the love of God, love to one another, give us the command of our passions, and bend us to the practice of righteousness. We might farther enlarge on the nature and beauty of every Christian virtue, the obligations to the practice of it derived from the light of nature, and strengthened by revelation of the love and gospel of Jesus. Indulge, then, in this heavenly conversation, and you shall ever bless

the day that made you acquainted with such friends; for in very deed *a wholesome tongue is a tree of life; but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit.*

## SERMON IV.

## SOLDIERS.

“ From whence come wars and fighting among you ? Sirs, ye are brethren ; why do ye harm one to another ?

IN the holy Scriptures, innumerable reasons are suggested to prevail on men to repress every angry passion, to persuade them to do justly, to love mercy, walk humbly, cultivate the kind affections, and cherish the spirit of benevolence. But though we were at first made upright, we have sought out many inventions, and, alas ! how many of these have been evil ones ! All men are formed and upheld by the same common Father ; therefore they are brethren ; for he hath formed of one blood all the kindreds of the earth. *Ye are all, then, brethren ; why do ye harm one to another ?* If princes,

before they commit any atrocious act of public injustice ; if lawgivers, before they rashly enact any law leading to oppression, slavery, and blood, would but take time to consider, pause, and think, before they pass the Rubicon ; just recollect simply that all men are their brethren, and that they are accountable creatures,—what carnage, what misery of the human race might often be saved !

But princes and great men, who are the means of stirring up wars and commotions among their fellow-men, generally live in luxury in their palaces, far from the battle's alarm, and are but little sensible of the miseries that accompany the wars which they themselves have raised : even the people in common life are not, I am certain, apprised half enough of the horrors which accompany it ; for as soon as we are able to attend to any thing, we hear and read about war and all the barbarous acts of destruction, until we become not only familiar with

them, but delighted, valuing the hero still the more in proportion to the thousands he has destroyed. We never stop to consider how horrible these scenes are, because what we know of them we generally learn at an age when the mind receives ideas implicitly, admires every thing that appears great, and never loses those early impressions, which remain indelibly fixed in it for ever. Hence it is, that if a person in low life, to gratify his avarice or revenge, waylays and murders another, we shudder at such cruelty; but if a statesman, to gratify his pride, his ambition, or aspiration at fame or dominion, forms a plan, in the execution of which a million of innocent unoffending people shall by the sword be hurried into eternity, we applaud his valour and the daring greatness of his spirit. What is the fortune of the two culprits? The one is dragged to the gallows as he deserves; but the greater culprit of the two, the infinitely more criminal, is lauded by

gaping crowds of slavish and stupid people, and perhaps gets himself possessed of half the riches of a kingdom.

I myself know nothing of the art of war; but have often turned my attention to the pride and ambition which occasion it, and to the destruction which it spreads among the human race; and I would fain lay before those who recklessly begin wars and conduct them, a few things which deserve their serious consideration.

Consider the small accession of comfort or delight that springs from opulence or large possessions. The vanity of ambition and all worldly grandeur—the injustice of all private fightings and public wars. But, most of all, consider that we have the clearest prospects of a life to come; and in what manner, say twenty thousand souls of neighbouring nations, ascending together from the carnage of a battle-field, will think and talk of the ridiculous scene which they have just quitted; and how they have (for they



know not what) thus hurried themselves from all the kindred ties of life into the presence of their judge, with all their imperfections on their heads.

There is another thing, which it is strange kings and conquerors have never considered, which is, that whatever they may lose, they never gain any thing by war, even though their troops have been rather successful. Look at all the wars of Europe for hundreds of years, and you will see, that, after millions of human beings had been sacrificed, at the end all things were settled the same as when the war began, and the same boundaries remained to be peopled anew. It is really so ridiculous, that one can hardly think on it as the doings of rational creatures and Christians.

After the campaigns of Buonaparte, and the slaughter of so many millions among the most civilised nations on the face of the earth, and which ended so completely in smoke, I really thought

there would never be any more wars in Europe, but that all would be settled by arbitration ; and I have still a hope that, in this enlightened age, the days of battle and war are far hence.

It would appear from history, that the rulers of kingdoms have often kindled up the flames of war, they scarcely knew why or wherefore ; so that upon a retrospective view, historians and politicians have been quite at a loss how to account for it. The history of every war is very like a scene I once saw in Nithsdale. Two boys from different schools met one fine day upon the ice. They eyed each other with rather jealous and indignant looks, and with defiance on each brow.

“ What are ye glowrin’ at, Billy ? ”

“ What’s that to you ? I’ll look where I have a mind, an’ hinder me if ye daur.”

A hearty blow was the return to this, and there such a battle began. It being Saturday, all the boys of both schools were on the ice ; and the fight instantly

became general and desperate. At one time they fought with missile weapons, such as stones and snow-balls; but at length they coped in a rage, and many bloody raps were liberally given and received. I went up to try if I could pacify them; for by this time a number of little girls had joined the affray, and I was afraid they would be killed; so, addressing the one party, I asked what they were pelting the others for? What they had done to them?

“O, naething at a’, man; we just want to gie them a good thrashin’.”

After fighting till they were quite exhausted, one of the principal heroes stepped forth between, covered with blood, and his clothes to tatters, and addressed the belligerent parties thus:

“Weel; I’ll tell you what we’ll do wi’ ye: if ye’ll let us alane, we’ll let you alane.” There was no more of it; the war was at an end, and the boys scattered away to their play. I thought at

the time, and have often thought since, that that trivial affray was the best epitome of war in general, that I had ever seen. Kings and ministers of state are just a set of grown-up children, exactly like the children I speak of, with only this material difference, that instead of fighting out the needless quarrels they have raised, they sit in safety and look on, hound out their innocent but servile subjects to battle, and then, after a waste of blood and treasure, are glad to make the boy's conditions, "If ye'll let us alane, we'll let you alane."

It would be much more conformable to what nature dictates, for kings or their ministers to fight it out in person, or each by a champion, like the Israelites and Philistines. But who among them ever testifies the noble feeling and sentiments of King David, when, for a particular offence of his, a great plague was to come on his subjects, who were innocent? who can cease to admire the gene-

rosity and disinterestedness of the great Psalmist of Israel at that trying juncture? “And David spake unto the Lord and said, Lo! I have sinned, and I have done wickedly; but as for these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me and my father’s house.”

But wars have been since the beginning of the world, and cannot always be avoided; but there are some rules which I think never should be violated,—for even that nation, which by its injustice hath excited against itself a just war, has rights which it would be the highest injustice to invade. Whatever is repulsive to nature and reason, I take to be unlawful in war. Nothing should be done that tends merely to exasperate and make the breach wider, and lengthen out the contest—nothing but what hath a tendency to bring the war to a close. Incursions into the interior parts of an enemy’s country, to burn their villages, drive their cattle, robbing

and killing the defenceless peasantry, is unjust and cruel in the extreme. These had no hand in raising the war—they never gave your government or yourselves any offence, nor had it in their power to do so; why then wreak your vengeance on them? The fortune of war is apt to change, and a cutting remembrance of such needless and unavailing acts of barbarity may provoke a dreadful retaliation. It is, moreover, a paltry, pilfering way of making war dishonourable to yourselves and the country to whom you belong.

There are a few more general rules which you, as Christian soldiers, should never break through. An ambassador, a mediator, or hostage, are never to be injured in their persons or property—soldiers never cut down or fired upon after they have laid down their arms and asked quarter—the wounded are not to be slaughtered on the field, nor prisoners killed or barbarously used—the sword

never to be drawn against old men, children, or women, and the persons of the latter to be held as sacred. These are a few of the rules and restrictions which ought to be observed among all civilised and especially Christian armies. They are often violated ; but, brave soldiers, remember this, that whenever you do violate any of them, you injure your characters as men, as well as that of your commander, and the country that gave you your birth and education.

But, after every deduction which the most unbounded charity can make for the vices of mankind, I am afraid we must allow, that there is some malignity in the heart, before we can perceive the glory of warlike achievements acquired over the bodies of the wounded and the dead. I declare to you, soldiers, that I shudder every time I think of the scene that a field of battle presents ; and I am persuaded, that though I had the strength and the courage of Hector, yet I could never



have brought them to the test. What a strange, unnatural thing is a general war! If men were allowed to go on increasing their numbers and possessions, this world would be a tolerable residence for such a length of time as we are intended by Providence to continue in it. We should, indeed, still be exposed to the diseases and pains which are incident to our imperfect state. But, as if these were not sufficient to employ the rancour of one part of mankind, and to exercise the patience of another, or as if the world were not wide enough, we must contend tribe against tribe, and nation against nation, until a certain number, as many as can be wanted, are killed, and then the remainder are glad to make peace on the boy of Thornhill's terms.

War is, without doubt, a great evil; and has originated in the evil and malevolent passions of our nature, which seem to form a primitive part of our constitution, and which neither the reasonings of



the philosopher, nor the injunctions of religion, have been able to eradicate ; but self-preservation is its only legitimate object ; and where this can be obtained by other means, recourse cannot justifiably be had to war. In this clear principle all writers on ethics are agreed ; and it is by a reference to this principle alone, that every war must be ultimately vindicated or condemned. Were governments scrupulous in their adherence to those great principles of universal equity which are common to states and individuals, and by which the rights of both ought to be adjusted, wars would cease to desolate and depopulate the earth. The very existence of war, indeed, implies the absence of law. It is an attempt to supply its place by a recurrence to those first principles of our nature which prompt us instinctively to self-defence. The war of nations rests precisely on the same grounds for its justification as that of individuals. When men congregate together, it becomes

necessary to unite their force to accomplish objects to which individual exertion would be inadequate; but there is no theological difference between public and private wars; they rest on the same ground, and must be justified or condemned by a reference to the same principles.

It has been maintained by many divines that all wars are unlawful; and that a Christian cannot, under any circumstances, be justified in destroying his fellow-creatures. Yet, though I entertain a detestation for all wars, public or private, I must be allowed to question the soundness of this doctrine. That the Scriptures uniformly describe wars in their proper characters, as crimes and judgments, is literally true, and their origin is ascribed to our lawless and malignant passions, as in the first clause of our text. But the profession of a soldier is no where forbidden in Scripture, that I remember of. On the contrary, when the soldiers came to John the Baptist, and asked him what

it was their duty to do, he answered them, "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages." This last is a hint the same as I gave before, that they were not to plunder or pilfer; but there is nothing in the injunction of the prophet desiring them to relinquish their profession. That a soldier may be a good man and a sincere Christian I am well aware, both from history and personal knowledge; but I have a higher authority than either. Consider what our Saviour says of a soldier and officer, "I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel."

But the application of the principles of morality to individual cases of war is very difficult. The reference of self-preservation is in many instances too abstract and remote for the direction of private consciences; but it is essential to the general interests of belligerent nations, that their modes of action in warfare as well as peace should be regulated by some

constant and known rule. This is admitted by the existence of that artificial jurisprudence, entitled "the law of nations." Now, though this code has grown insensibly into usage, without any form, acknowledgment, or known original, yet this is the very law which I would advise every soldier of honour not to invalidate. I have enumerated all such already as strike my inexperience as essential, and I repeat the remark merely to bring in one very singular custom which seems to be universally admitted as the law of nations.

It is that which relates to newly discovered countries, the sovereignty of which belongs to the prince or state by whose subjects it was first discovered. Now, nothing can be more fanciful, or less supported by any considerations of reason, than this, that the transient occupation and idle ceremonies which accompany it should confer the sovereignty of that country upon any one. No stipula-

tion can be produced by which the rest of the world have bound themselves to the admission of such a pretension. Yet not admitted, it would necessarily lead to endless bloody wars and contentions. It is thus that utility makes laws for itself. The rule above stated possesses the great requisites of determination and certainty, and has long been generally, though silently, acquiesced in, from the manifest certainty that no power has the influence or ability to procure the adoption of a better rule. But I must now return to a few of the moral definitions of war.

In the rudest state of society the savage is found in friendship with his own tribe, and at war with his neighbours. The country, to a certain extent, has been from the beginning of the world in possession of the ancestors of this great and illustrious tribe, which every one of them are, and every one the greatest and the most ancient. The sun was created to shine upon them. The Great Spirit had

been exceedingly bountiful to them. The hills, the rivulets, the woods, and the wild beasts, all belonged to them alone ; and if a stranger dared to trespass on those ancient and sacred rights, he was sure to suffer for his rashness. Then the yell of war resounded through both savage communities, and an exterminating war begun. We cannot read without shudderings of horror, the dreadful resentment which burned in the bosoms of these unenlightened heathens. We follow the captives of the victorious to the cruel, savage scene which precedes their destruction, and rejoice in those liberal arts and the mild spirit of Christianity which have taught us humanity.

Though it is to be hoped that wars and wickedness will cease throughout the world, yet, on a retrospect, there seems often to have been a moral necessity for them to purge a land of enormous wickedness. Of all the sanguinary nations who ever inhabited the face of the globe, there were



never any like the chosen people of God, the Turks and Tartars not excepted; and yet their most ruthless murders of men, women, and children, seem to have been done mostly by God's express commands. What shall we say then? The Creator and Governor of the universe cannot do wrong; and, as sure as his word is truth, hath he ordered the total extinction of nations and families. Therefore, it is only by the spread of Christianity over the world, and the cultivation of universal love and peace, that the halcyon days predicted by the prophet can ever be accomplished. "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them; and the cow and the bear shall feed, their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the

cockatrice's den. For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

Christianity has yearly and daily more and more influence over our conduct; and we enjoy a wider range of pleasures—innocent, agreeable, and fraught with intellectual improvement—than our fathers did; yet we are no less destructive in fields of battle than they were, but have rather improved in our modes of general destruction. In this state of human affairs, then, there is nothing left but to invite all men of wit and learning, all who are possessed of humanity, and all who are interested in the peace and happiness of the world, to unite their endeavours and talents to bring the system of destruction into discredit, that the sword may not devour for ever. Why should ambitious men appeal either to the present age or posterity for the glory of their character? Let us never be dazzled with what is splendid, unless it be also just.



The endeavours of the learned and wise alone, united in the support of humanity, would be more than sufficient to bear down the clamorous desires of ambition, and quiet the turbulence of mankind; and to this glorious combination every true minister of the gospel of Jesus is bound to contribute a part.

I know that the soldier will reply to this, that it is an ideal triumph of humanity over reason, for that war is a disease which never can be cured, because in most instances there is no safety except in carrying it on. There is no tribunal to which he can appeal from an armed force; and nothing can resist its operation save force opposed to force, and violence to violence. It is too true; the study of the art of war, however, is the most dangerous of any. It leads to no aim or end besides the taking of life. The lion roars for his prey, yet when he is satiated he returns to his den; but the thirst of military fame is never quenched. Every

victory is a new starting place from which to unleash the dogs of havoc and of war. I am sensible that mine are only the feeble attempts of a compassionate heart, to heal the wounds which have never ceased to bleed since the second man in the world committed the first murder; but if they should be instrumental in saving the honour of one individual of my countrymen, or the life of one fellow-creature, though I may not be alive to enjoy it, I shall not lose my reward. Let me conclude this rambling discourse by a quotation, which I have always deemed powerful, from one of our ancient dramatists—whom I do not know.

“ The dreadful harass of the war is o’er,  
And Slaughter, that, from yestermorn till even,  
With giant steps passed striding o’er the field,  
Besmeared and horrid with the blood of nations;  
Now weary sits among the mangled heaps,  
And slumbers o’er her prey.”

## SERMON V.

TO YOUNG MEN.

“ My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.”

THERE was never any precept given from the tongue or pen of man more cogent than this; for in the choice of our friends and connexions principally consists the virtue or the guilt, the happiness or misery, of every man through life. Taking this as a position which admits of no contradiction, I shall proceed to point out some rules whereby to choose our early friends.

I have been always happy in the choice of my intimate friends, excepting, perhaps, in one instance; and I shall, therefore, give my young friends such directions in the choice of theirs as reason and my slight experience shall direct.

I remember when I first entered into

genteel society, which was not till after the year 1813, I thought it the easiest matter possible to gain the affections of every person, of whatever age, and to live in habits of intimacy and friendship with them. Alas! how soon I found myself mistaken; for, to my astonishment, the very men with whom I had been so happy over night, who had crammed me with flattery more than I could hold—and it is a dish with which I am not very apt to be satiated—who had invited me to their houses, not on one day but every day that suited my convenience, would the next day, when I addressed them in the kindest and most affectionate way I was able, stare me in the face, and shrink from the gloveless hand of the poor poet, without uttering a word! “Go thy ways, Paul,” said I to myself; “when I have a convenient season I will speak to thee on this matter.”

But this reflection relates only to my own sex. If I have ever had reason to complain of the other, it has been on the

contrary side. Blessings on them ! for their kindnesses have often put me out of countenance so that never a word I could say. In the choice of these for friends and partners, I shall have something to say by-and-by. In the mean time, I shall lay a few injunctions on such young men as I respect and love ; and, as I have a heart, I do not know a living soul whom I do not wish well.

Youth is desirous of enjoyment, but free from that selfishness which we acquire by experience in the world. The education of all young men of a certain rank of life, whatever may be their future destination, is conducted on nearly the same plan, imposes nearly the same restraints, and their times of relaxation from the fatigues of study and application are spent in nearly the same pursuits and arrangements. The consequence is, that, till a young man is sent to the academy, every boy he meets with at his father's house, low and high, rich or poor, is an intimate and bosom friend,

even though he should have known him only for a few days. They will cry at parting, and forget one another in shorter time than they have been together. This is the first opening of a flower, which will shed its fragrance over our whole life, if we cherish and cultivate it. I am far from blaming those first emanations of the human heart, and I think no system of education can be perfect by which they are not encouraged. It very frequently happens, that lasting friendships spring from the transient intercourse of children ; but the pursuits, habits, and professions of men, are so different from the links which connected them in early life, that this cannot always take place. It is generally, therefore, at a more advanced period that we form those attachments which continue to old age, and which end only with our lives. The time for doing this, is when we are entering on the business of life, and preparing for the stations which we intend

to occupy. In other words, a young friend of mine is just pushing his vessel from the shore, and it can certainly do him no harm to consider a little who will make the best companions of his voyage. Then is the time to keep in mind the warning voice, "*If sinners entice thee, consent thou not.*"

You might account me a selfish old man, and tainted with the disease of worldly prudence, were I to continue the metaphor, and maintain that you should allow none to accompany you in the hazardous voyage except such as you could employ at the helm or the sails; or that you should choose your friends as you choose your clothes—to set you off to advantage and keep you warm. But this is not the advice I give you, for it is contrary to my own feelings and experience. Friendship purely disinterested, is that only which deserves the name. In the common intercourse of mankind, indeed, we call every man our friend who is not



our enemy ; and he, too, sometimes, by way of derision. But if a man speak well of us in our absence, or take a little trouble in promoting our interests, he is immediately styled our friend, and certainly with some propriety. But a cynic might say, that surely selfishness is the universal character among mankind, since trivial acts of kindness are so much noted. In this commerce of courtesy and affection, no man is deceived ; and we may generally consider it more as an excess of politeness than an error of the heart. But there is still much benevolence in the world, and as I am speaking to young men, I hope I shall be trusted when I say, that they must have particular friends as well as general ones ; and the characters of the former of these I shall endeavour to point out.

Be sure, then, to mix prudence with the first dictates of the heart in such a choice. Seek not for your associates and bosom friends in the wilds of romance,



but in the world—in the labyrinth of life—among people subject to the same vicissitudes as yourself. Rash friendships are never lasting; and if you think every person you meet with of open and frank character, whom you like for some congeniality of disposition with yourself, and desire to knit him to you for ever, it is almost ten to one that you will find yourself disappointed. Some little unexpected jealousies will occasionally happen between people who truly love one another, the rude shock of which would easily upset a hasty and precarious friendship; you will therefore do better to cultivate the dispositions of mind which will in due time secure you valuable and lasting friendships, founded on virtue and similarity of dispositions, which will ultimately prove of more value than making to yourselves friends at once.

I know some young people who choose their friends by the eye—the same as they choose a coat or vest. I do not dis-

approve of this altogether; for, there certainly is something in every human countenance less or more attractive, or less or more repulsive; and I would trust more to Lavater than to Spurzheim. But never once form the least estimate of a character until you hear him or her speak. The tones of the voice are the best symptoms in the world whereby to form a true and immediate judgment of a character. They are the chords of the soul; and if you have any ear for music, you may as easily judge of the sterling value of the character as of a violin or an organ. There is not a single feature of a character which is not delineated in the tones of the voice. I have been often taken with the appearance and countenances of young men in public assemblies, and yet the very first time I heard them speak, I found at once that they were consummate blockheads. But whenever I found the countenance and the voice accord in sweetness, I could then form an

estimate of the character, which, in all my life, I have never had occasion to change. But there is one thing, I think, I may affirm—that in the whole world, among human beings as among sheep, there is not one character, countenance, nor voice, exactly like another; and yet, among all this diversity, you will scarcely find two individuals in whom there is not some point of contrast which may render them agreeable and acceptable to each other. We are, indeed, strangely and wonderfully made.

But it is vain to expect that from such slight approximations of character a lasting union can be established. Many young men of shallow minds, however, are deceived by such incidental instances of similarity, and expect that they have found a steady and sincere friend, because, perchance, they were pleased with him in one of his moods. I am far from inculcating a jealous or suspicious temper in your intercourse with the world, for

this is a character I abhor, even when I find it under grey hairs ; and I do so because I can never be sure whether the owner has acquired it by reflection on his own character or the villany of the world.

But when this is the temper of a young man, there is no ambiguity in the case ; because, he has had no experience to suggest its necessity, and you may almost depend on it that extreme caution and jealousy in youth will turn out villany in old age. “ Let no such man be trusted.”

You ought, however, to be prudent in the choice of your friends ; not because you suspect their integrity, or because you are afraid of being deceived, but because, on full trial, they may be deficient in that congeniality of mind which is the true cement of friendship, and which unites the heart of one man to another. This sort of prudence I think fair and honourable ; nor is it any impeachment

of your acquaintance that they have not all the qualities which your heart desires. But remember this, if ever your adopted friend should endeavour to persuade you into a house or company which is improper, thenceforth drop all intimacy with him, and remember this sterling adage, "*My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.*"

Where there is not virtue, there can be no real friendship. There may be associations of knaves, and their common interests may give them laws and bind them for some time together; but you may be assured that any friendship which deserves the name must be free from all suspicion, and built on the integrity of your friend's character, and the purity of your own. There are blemishes in all characters; certain little defects arising from constitution or temper, which we should all be better without, but which we are not able to relinquish. Therefore, if we expect absolute perfection, we must

look for men in other worlds, to whom we may unbosom ourselves. We have, besides, no right to demand this perfection, as we must all be conscious how many imperfections we have ourselves. Therefore, those blemishes never ought to prevent, or interrupt, friendship. The law of kindness on this head is to think on our own blemishes when we observe and pity those of our friends ; and if they have good qualities which we find endear them to us, we must forgive their failings, and patiently endure what we are not able to prevent. But it is of use for us to know, that the man is best qualified for friendship who has benevolent affections to cover his faults. I would have you always choose that person for your friend whose spots are best visible when he is with those whom he loves ; but, when I write to you on this subject, I request you to remark the wide difference between those unavoidable blemishes which are found in the characters of worthy men, and the



vices which are found only in the haunts of wickedness. You see a good man striving against his weakness, and after gaining strength daily, finally to overcome it ; but it is the nature of vice to debase the character ; and every act of wickedness, whatever it is, makes you worse than you were before. You become gradually to have less and less power to resist temptation, and are less afraid of the discovery of your guilt. Never think of choosing a friend unless you can live with him by day or by night without seeing the example of vicious conduct : and never associate cordially with men whose example or advice appears to lead you from the path of truth and uprightness ; for there is a way that leadeth unto life, and another that as certainly leadeth to destruction ; therefore, “ *O my son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.*”

It is a fact hardly reconcilable with reason, but it is nevertheless true, that the path of destruction is always most

irrecoverably dangerous when we are found in it with those we love. Their persuasive voice and animating example conceal from us the pit and the snare that lie before us. I have known more young men ruined in their prospects by improper attachments than by all other casualties put together; therefore, I intreat you, to keep company and converse with those alone who will do you honour by their virtues, and instruct you by their example.

It is the common practice among vicious young men to debauch the sober; and they seem to enjoy a sort of malignant pleasure when they succeed. Such companions never discover to you at once the whole deformity of their character. Their own gradual defection from what they once were, has taught them the most successful methods of infusing the poison of vice, and yet concealing its odiousness. I suppose Satan himself would have been less dangerous to mankind if he had never



been an angel of light. Men of this character, from what motive I know not, whether it be to have access to their purse, to have companions in sin, or for the love of evil for its own sake, seem to consider sober and virtuous young men as fair game, whom, by every means in their power, they are to hunt into their toils. It therefore becomes my duty to warn you of your danger, and I do it with a thousand times less anxiety than I should try to reclaim you if fairly gone astray.

There is an inherent modesty in the innocence of youth, which rejects vice. This is a guard which the providence of God has placed over us, when we are in the most unsuspecting and unprotected condition. In leading you astray, therefore, the artful will not discover to you for a long time the whole length they mean to carry you. They will even counterfeit virtue and disinterestedness, till they get you entangled in the net

which they have spread ; they will lay hold of your affections to corrupt your heart. But while I am setting before you the character of a kind of men who make it their employment to deceive unadvised youth, I am far from wishing you to believe that your acquaintance in general design to mislead you. On the contrary, if you begin life with too much caution, and with great fear of being deceived, you will disgust those who are worthy of your friendship, and lay yourself more open to the attacks of the artful and designing. You need not, therefore, hang out a flag of defiance to tempt them to try the powers of their ingenuity on your prudence. It is the wicked only who fleeth when no man pursueth. Simple integrity is a better defence to a young man's virtue than excessive caution and pretended superior prudence.

But there is a prudence in your own heart, which you must exercise in the choice of your friends, as well as rejecting

the unworthy. You must judge of the character of your associates by the effect produced in your own mind; and if the same person who engages your affection promotes your knowledge and your virtue, why should you not cherish him in your heart as a dear and confidential friend? If a man can retire from the company of the wicked when he discovers their character, and feels himself injured by it, he is as perfectly safe as if he were always suspecting danger. It is to this point I request you to direct your attention in the choice of your friends. There are persons of generous dispositions, and of easy and frank manners, who are in all respects worthy of your confidence, if they have no views which may be the more dangerous to you as you love them for their good qualities. Vice is sanctioned to the mind of a young man when it appears only as some spot or blemish of the person whom he esteems; it loses its name and its odiousness, and before you

have learned all the virtues of a person of this description, you will very probably have learned to imitate some of his defects. Do not think, therefore, that you are perfectly safe with one who has many of the dispositions which qualify him for friendship, if there be a single part of his character which you cannot imitate without destroying your own virtue. I should never take a man as a bosom friend whom I could not follow into every place and copy after, or at least not be ashamed of any thing he did.

When you grow an old man like me, you will have many general acquaintances, who, instead of leading you astray, will derive benefit from your example; and you will have particular friends whom you will love with your whole heart; but, as I now suppose myself counselling young men of frank and honourable minds, your own experience will join in the observation, that there are a few steps only between the making an acquaintance and a

friend. The impetuosity of youth accords ill with the moderation of age. No reasoning of mine will be competent to overcome this law of nature at this period of life; and it follows, that if you are inclined to be idle, or dissipated, or extravagant, you may find abundance of friends to suit your humours; but you will observe, at the same time, that idleness, dissipation, and extravagance, are not laws of nature. You may depend upon it, that friendship cemented by vice is founded on selfishness, and must be easily dissolved, fading away like the morning dew. It is not that generous affection which subsists between men of worth and integrity, that noble and disinterested regard for another which makes you seek his good, and desire to become one mind and one soul with him and his virtues. Therefore, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not; but meantime the friends thou hast, and whose adoption thou hast tried, grapple to thy soul

with hoops of steel. One of the old English poets gives a beautiful picture of such a friendship ; but as I always quote from youthful memory—for I have none now—I do not know who it is :—

“ They both were servants—they both princes were ;  
If any joy to one of them was sent,  
It was most his to whom it least was meant ;  
And fortune’s malice between both was cross’d,  
For, striking one, it wounded th’other most.”

You will often hear weak and discontented persons repeating from day to day, that friendship has left the world, and nothing but self exists in its room. The amount of this observation is no more than this—that they have never found it ; and it is a sure sign that they have never deserved to find it ; for whenever you inquire into these declaimers, you will find them to be peevish, selfish men, who consider friendship as a compact of advantage—a sort of unsteady men, who cannot continue long in the same mind ; or vicious men, who must either debauch



their friends or part with them. The friendship of selfishness, if there be such a thing in existence, endures only till one of the parties finds himself deceived; a weak mind is steady until it is engaged in forming a new friendship; and a vicious man has no reason to complain.

From all this I wish you to learn, if you desire to obtain this blessing of infinite price, that it depends on yourself whether you shall ever obtain it. If you come to the market, bring along with you the coin which will purchase the commodity. The free and uncontrolled commerce of the affections is founded on virtue; of which, if you are destitute, you have no right to blame other men for the want of friendship. Do you wish to enjoy the esteem of good men? then, make yourself worthy of it. A young man who possesses any degree of reflection and foresight, will easily see the advantage of recommending himself to the worthy by a due regard to his own cha-

racter. He secures not only the approbation of his own mind and a fair reputation in the mean time, but, like a general who is beloved by his army, he is surrounded by an impenetrable host, who will repel the dangers of life, and make his passage through it safe and honourable. The love of good men is a defence to him who possesses it. It gives the whole world a favourable impression of his virtues, and it opens to him sources of advantage and improvement of which nothing but bad conduct can possibly deprive him.

Vice seeks concealment; and it is one of its distinguishing attributes, that it persuades its votaries to indulge in its practices without the fear of detection. Men's delicacy hinders them from telling you that you were last evening committing a debauch. Your own self-love will not allow you to believe that a thing is known which you wish to conceal. You do not know that the men around you



contrive to look into your heart, or at least into your most secret actions; or, if the thing should be known, you flatter yourself that the apologies which you study to make for yourself are so plausible that they cannot miss to be generally sustained. But these are the dangerous rocks on which the innocence and integrity of thousands are daily shipwrecked beyond the hopes of recovery. Be not deluded: there are a thousand avenues to the heart, and to the most secret actions, through which the world obtain distorted views of your character. There is no truth of greater importance to a young man beginning life than this one which I am stating. The vain hope of concealment is often the first thing that blunts the edge of that ingenuousness which is the great guard of virtue. Be assured, then, that if men do not judge of you as you are, they will be ready to err on the uncharitable side, and make you worse rather than better. Were

it even possible to deceive the quick and satirical eye of the world, your character would gain the detestable addition of hypocrisy to your other vices, and you would shun the intimacy of good men for fear of being discovered. Your connexions with the worthy are the test and security of your virtue. Cultivate their friendship, imitate their example, listen to their advice, and *if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.*

There is a wide difference between one who learns to practise a virtue and one who only affects to do it. In the one case there must be something in the soil to cherish and bring forward the infant plant—some native strength to make it rear its head during the frosts of the spring, and to secure that freshness and vigour in its whole progress which shews it to be indigenous. In the other you place a flower in a bottle, where its temporary freshness and beauty cannot conceal from you that it is not in a natural

situation. There is a modesty in pure desires after excellence which affectation can never counterfeit. Nature has bestowed on us the power of looking behind the mask. It never costs us much trouble to discover a character, if our prejudices would let us. We see what he wishes to be, and we are informed by his awkward attempts that it is not what he really is. Affectation also generally fixes on splendid excellencies for the objects of its imitation; for, when we step beyond the limits of nature, we are easily induced to aim at something conspicuous. For instance, I never knew a gentleman in my life whom as many young friends attempted to imitate as Professor John Wilson, in his manner, speaking, and composition—not only his pupils, but long ere he was a professor, or distinguished for any thing very particularly superior; and I declare that every one of them made a fool of himself. I lectured some of our mutual

friends full broadly upon this, but they denied the imputation, and said it was all jealousy, because no one attempted to imitate me save the professor himself.

But before closing this essay I must remind you that there are two classes of men who are in nothing benefited by the studies of their youth, and with neither would I wish you to form intimate friendships. The one class consists of those who rest their character on their conversation and manners, though every thing they say or do tells you they have learned nothing, or have taken particular good care to forget what they have learned. The other consists of those who rest their character entirely on learning, and bore you for ever with it. I advise you, both in your own character, and in the choice of your intimate friends, to avoid either of these extremes. The liberal sciences are the business and

occupation of youth, but we do not acquire them merely for the purpose of displaying them. They are no farther necessary than to invigorate your mind and to prepare you for the discharge of active and important duties. The possession of learning, therefore, is useful to your character, but never ought to be made the parade of it. Consider for what it was that you were bred to virtuous knowledge, and had the germs of wisdom early implanted in your mind. It was to teach you to rule your passions, to subdue their rage, and stay their headlong course through the mazes of eventful life. Reflect, that life and death are only varied modes of endless being. Reflect, that life, like every other blessing, derives its value only from the use you make of it. It was not for itself that the Eternal gave it, but for a nobler end, and that end is VIRTUE. If your life is preserved by the loss of your wealth, the

bargain is profitable, but both would be cheaply saved by the loss of virtue. Therefore, *my son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not*

## SERMON VI.

## REASON AND INSTINCT.

“ I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body,  
be preserved blameless.”

THIS is a difficult subject for an old shepherd to enter upon. What ! hath man a spirit, a soul, and a body ? So St. Paul seems to infer, and therefore I am bound to believe it as true ; but how to separate the soul and the spirit, I am rather at a loss. The latter I must suppose to be the principle of animal life inherent in every living creature, and resident in the blood and the nerves ; and the other that reasonable and immortal substance in the human race which distinguishes them from all other earthly creatures, and is the fountain of thought, reason, and conception. It is a ray of the Divinity ; a spirit united to an organised body, by which all the operations of

mind are carried on. Its existence is apparent by consciousness or conception of our own being, and its continuing permanent amid the successive changes of our material frame. Philosophers have come to no certain conclusion as to its seat in the body, with the exception of my friend and patron Dr. Dunlop, who is quite decided on the subject,—and there are more impossible theories, too, than his; but as it may not be deemed orthodox, I do not choose to set it down here. The truth is, that its qualities and substance no man can comprehend. To state any other opinions of men concerning it, would be but exposing human ignorance.

Some of the ancients have supposed that there are three kinds of souls, the rational, the sensitive, and the vegetative. But in all ages the soul has furnished questions of difficulty, and no human investigation has yet proved adequate to the final settlement of the dispute;



and after all that has been written on this incomprehensible subject, the utmost that can be inferred amounts only to this, that all we know of the soul is merely its various states of changeful feeling. Its immortality is, I think, manifest, from that longing after immortality inherent in every bosom; from the apprehension of the mind when filled with remorse on account of guilt; from the unsuitableness of the present state to the intellectual faculties of men; and from its capacities of enjoyment, and the ideas we are led to entertain of the Divine administration.

It appears to me to be a matter of great doubt, whether we shall most increase our knowledge respecting the residence of the soul by considering the frame and organisation of the body, or by attending to the various workings of that living principle which animates us. It is in this last way, I confess, that I have formed my notions on the subject,

and they are still so indistinct, that I really cannot say whether it resides in the brain, the heart, or the muscles, or in them all together. It is too true, that the wisest of men often mistake their way in the world by thinking that their ingenuity is employed in a matter unworthy of them unless it be engaged in pursuits above human comprehension.

I shall, therefore, in treating of the human soul, attend to those near resemblances to reason and intelligence which we find in the brute creation, and consider whether our souls be different from theirs, or only superior to them. The lowest part of our rational nature, if it be a part at all, is certainly that which receives the impression of external objects. Now it is an undoubted fact, that animals of almost every description possess this faculty. They see the same objects, hear the same sounds, and enjoy the same sensual pleasures that we do ; but whether such impressions are made.

on body or spirit, is rather a puzzling question. I believe — but, being a mere pupil of nature, am no authority to be depended on — that there is a copy of these impressions, similar to the images of mountains, rocks, and trees, reflected from a smooth lake, thrown over all creatures, both men and brutes. Now, though I believe in this, the nature of the unsubstantial copy I do not comprehend. But whenever I come to examine the uses which men and the brute creation make of the same impressions made on similar organs, I can then perceive the power of reason and intelligence in the one, and the want of them in the other. The experience of those animals which have the nearest affinity to human wisdom is varied in their different kinds, though it be nothing more than an unvaried and delegated power, the operation of which is limited to the continuation of the species, or to the preservation of the individual. I have

studied the character of sundry of the most ingenious and docile animals very minutely, but have never yet been able certainly to discover any approach to amelioration, any increase of wisdom, or any addition made to the experience or instinct of any animal, in any considerable degree, when left solely to the exertion of its own powers and ingenuity. How different from this is man, who continues still increasing in knowledge, and will do world without end! I consider human life merely as an apprenticeship to immortality; and this belief has taught me, more than the reasoning of a thousand volumes, that God has bestowed on man a faculty which he never intended any other earthly creature to possess.

I have witnessed some, and read of other very remarkable instances of the combination of these impressions communicated by the organs, amounting to something very like reflection and judg-

ment, in some animals, and like memory, in many more. I have seen a shepherd's dog contrive expedients for effecting his purpose which one-half of the human race were incapable of in the same instant of time. I have likewise seen some extraordinary instances of recollection in horses. Indeed, they seem never to forget any incident that befalls them, nor the place where it happened. I once came to a reverend divine fairly arrested on his journey, in the middle of a wild moor, by this singular faculty of his horse. He had alighted, and was whipping her round and round, but when he saw me approaching he gave over.

“What's the matter wi' ye, Mr. Paton?” said I. “What ails ye at your yaud?”

“Why, I bogged her there the year before last, and had very nearly lost her,” said he; “and she seems to have a better memory than a judgment, for though the road is now mended and firm, she will not go near it.”

I could multiply hundreds of instances of the same kind, especially in dogs ; and elephants, I believe, are accounted still superior. Be it so ; yet I trust I shall promote the purposes of true wisdom better by tracing the great and distinguishing lines which God has drawn between man and the lower creation, than by puzzling you with a few points of resemblance, which no man can perfectly understand. There is no doubt that there are many animals which imitate, in some instances, the reason that we boast of. They can keep an object steadily in view, and they can take the nearest road to the attainment of that object.

Shall we, therefore, infer that there is an immaterial spirit in brutes as well as in men ? I think there is. But it does not follow that, like the spirits of men, they shall return to God who gave them. Solomon is of the same opinion, and very explicit on this point : “ Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and

the spirit of the beast that goeth downward into the earth ?" I say, then, seriously, and I hope without offence, that beasts have souls; and that these souls proceed from God himself, who is the great moving spirit of the universe. In saying so, I apply the observation to the instincts which he has implanted peculiar to every species. Instinct is, I think, an impression on an animal similar to what we discover in the vegetable creation, where every seed puts forth the stem, the leaves, and the blossom, peculiar to its species. Where is the intelligence of the majestic oak or the humble shrub? yet they follow all in the same course with one another. But the power which animals have over their mind, by which they seem to recall and combine their thoughts, is certainly of a different kind, but can only be said to approach to reason because capable of improvement.

It is indeed not easy to define the precise limits between reason and instinct.



The latter, in creatures so short-lived, is in many instances the more extraordinary of the two. Who teaches the new-yearned lamb, the first minute of its existence, to seek for the dug of its dam, and never once to mistake the place where it is to be found? Who teaches the birds to build their nests of the same materials, and of the very same form and dimensions, with those of their predecessors? or the bees to construct their cells with the most mathematical exactness? The works of these little architects of nature are truly wonderful! But there is one endowment of instinct which has often amazed me most of all. The salmon-fry are bred and reared, in many instances, thousands of miles from the ocean, yet they all set out for it simultaneously at the same period. They have no guide, no director, no one to inform them that there is an ocean, without which they cannot live—nothing but that supreme power which pervades the universe, and rules and directs the



motions of every living creature, plant, and flower. The more closely we study the works of nature, the more shall we admire and adore the Almighty power and wisdom that created and governs it. But these rapid and miscellaneous observations lead me now to treat the subject more philosophically.

Great men have differed so widely on this subject, that it is manifest the greater part of them have been wrong. From the resemblances which are observed between man and the brute creation, it has been the great object of philosophy to deduce their specific and leading differences ; and it is astonishing how much the regard for particular theories has narrowed the understandings of men otherwise great and good. Because they have found some points in which a faint resemblance may be traced, they cannot be satisfied with the reason bestowed on them, unless there be some one thing peculiar to themselves, and in which

none of their fellow-creatures of the lower orders can possibly participate. The man who pursues this one thing, whether he fixes on reason, speech, or risibility, is just exerting the powers of a rational mind to bring himself to the nearest possible level with the brute creation. On this important subject it is much more difficult to trace the resemblance than to mark the difference. The reason of brutes consists in a few efforts of memory and in a few instances of combination. This, to be sure, is wonderful, because we cannot account for it on other principles than those of immateriality. Still, they are more like the effects of varied instinct than the acts of a reasonable mind, for the efforts of such rational powers are always limited in their object. The most stupid of the feathered tribe, for example, turn the eggs daily in the nest during incubation. This seems to be the result of thought, founded on experience, and altogether necessary to maintain an equal heat. But I have

sometimes thought that the great heat in the breast of the hen at that period might feel a temporary relief by turning the cool side of the egg upward. In that probable case it cannot be attributed to a principle of reason, but to one of those wise provisions of nature without which no race of animals could exist. The bee, also, in the double cells of the comb, always finishes the joinings on the one side opposite to the opening of the other. May not this also arise from the inconveniency which would otherwise be occasioned in laying the foundations of the cells? Many more examples might be extracted from nature, if we understood the principles properly which occasioned them, and might all be traced to causes equally simple, and equally unconnected with the gift of reason; and therefore it behoves us to look carefully to the various impressions made on animals, before we decide hastily on the degree of reason which people would naturally suppose they possess.

These results of impressions, if we compare animate with inanimate things, are not more extraordinary than waters sinking or trees growing upward. This investigation leads us to hesitate whenever we feel disposed to ascribe the power of reason to any of the brute creation; for when we pass the bounds of those sallies of intelligence, imperfect as well as doubtful, and begin to contemplate the vigour and power of human thought, there can scarce be room for hesitation. I therefore again repeat it, that it is infinitely more difficult to discover any resemblance to reason in brutes, than it is to shew the decided difference between their reason and ours. That animals have each a language of their own to one another, there can be no doubt. I know a good deal of their languages myself. I know by the voice of the raven when he has discovered one of my flock dead—I know also his prelude to the storm and to fine weather. The

moorfowls can call one another from hill to hill. I learned to imitate their language so closely that I could have brought scores of them within the range of my shot of a morning. The blackcock has a call, too, which brings all his motley mates around him, but the females have no call. They are a set of subordinate beings, like the wives of a nabob. They dare not even incubate upon the same hill with their haughty lords. But the partridge, and every mountain-bird, have a language to each other, and though rather circumscribed, it is perfectly understood, and, as Wordsworth says, "not to me unknown." Even the stupid and silly barn-door hen, when the falcon appears, can, by one single alarm-note, make all her chickens hide in a moment. Every hen tells you when she has laid her egg; and, lest it should not be well enough heard or understood, the cock exerts the whole power of his lungs in divulging the important secret. The black-faced ewe,

on the approach of a fox or a dog, utters a whistle through her nostrils which alarms all her comrades, and immediately puts them upon the look-out. Not one of them will take another bite until they discover whence the danger is approaching. If the dog be with a man, sundry of them utter a certain bleat, which I know well but cannot describe, and begin feeding again. If the dog is by himself they are more afraid of him than any other animal, and you will then hear the whistle repeated through the whole glen.

But the acuteness of the sheep's ear surpasses all things in nature that I know of. A ewe will distinguish her own lamb's bleat among a thousand all braying at the same time, and making a noise a thousand times louder than the singing of psalms at a Cameronian sacrament in the fields, where thousands are congregated,—and that is no joke neither. Besides, the distinguishment of voice is perfectly reciprocal between the ewe and



lamb, who, amid the deafening sound, run to meet one another. There are few things have ever amused me more than a sheep-shearing, and then the sport continues the whole day. We put the flock into a fold, set out all the lambs to the hill, and then set out the ewes to them as they are shorn. The moment that a lamb hears its dam's voice it rushes from the crowd to meet her, but instead of finding the rough, well-clad, comfortable mamma, which it left an hour, or a few hours ago, it meets a poor naked shriveling — a most deplorable-looking creature. It wheels about, and uttering a loud tremulous bleat of perfect despair, flies from the frightful vision. The mother's voice arrests its flight—it returns—flies, and returns again, generally for ten or a dozen times before the reconciliation is fairly made up.

There is no doubt, then, that most animals have a language by which they can express their wishes and their fears to

one another; but what is it compared with the extent to which the use of speech gives us access in our communications with our own species, and in managing or teaching those of the lower classes? It is rather curious, that repetition of punishment, in dogs especially, will often produce unequivocal marks of shame and regret; and a feeling of unjust punishment often affects them so deeply, that they will for a time appear quite desperate, and either lose their usual capabilities, or refuse to exert them; but the nicest attention to their actions and motives can never lead us to conclude that they possess any thing similar to the power of conscience in man. They have fidelity and attachment to their benefactors—of that there is no doubt—which sometimes exceeds the gratitude of their masters; but, then, in the one case you have facts, which you are obliged to call virtues, but in the other you have materials under the control of a reasonable agency, which



are wrought up in an infinite variety of circumstances to all the virtues of which man is capable. Hence it follows, that in those instances in which brutes present to us the resemblance of reason, they are wholly destitute of what marks the interposition and power of mind. They may be wrought upon by approbation or the hope of reward from man, but in all their dealings with one another they are wholly selfish. Jealousy and revenge predominate in their natures; gratitude to one another they never think of. The instances of their ingenuity in escaping danger are astonishing; yet, except in the convolvolous doublings of the hare, I have scarcely perceived any combination of thought in preventing it.

These reflections may convince us that reason in brutes, though inexplicable to us, is limited to a very few points, connected only with their present situation, and intended by Divine wisdom to promote their safety and comfort. We see

the goodness of God to his creatures, but nothing to perplex or distress us when we compare their minds with our own. I should not hesitate concerning the immortality of my own soul, though it were revealed from Heaven that the reason of beasts is the effect of organisation; nor should I abandon my hopes of immortality, though I knew that their souls were immaterial. I know and feel that there is an intelligent principle within me striving to burst the slender and corporeal boundaries by which it has pleased God to imprison and confine it. I think every man feels, or should feel, that he is possessed of an intellectual and never-dying spirit. Is it not strange, then, that we must all be trying our strength on our own nature, and, by the nicest intricacy of research, the soul of man be still trying to discover what the soul of man is? This itself is a proof of the soul's existence; but even the profound discoverer, who admits it is no nearer

his purpose, nor is the wisdom of his investigation more apparent. It is still more ludicrous to think of the laborious researches which wise men have made, examining every part of the human body to discover the chief seat or residence of the soul. I say ludicrous, for I think nothing can be more absurd than to apply our notions of space to that which we allow to be spirit. I neither know, nor desire to know, where the seat of the soul is, further than that the body is the earthly palace which it inhabits during its state of probationary existence. And I have always had an idea, though I am far from pressing it on the belief of any one, that until once death was overcome, the gates of heaven were never opened to the souls of men. God himself is the food of the soul, in him alone it lives, moves, and hath its being, and can never pine for want of food, if sought in the right direction. Yet many secret indispositions and aversions to duty will

steal upon it; and it will require both time and close application of mind to recover it to such a frame as shall dispose it for the pure spiritualities of religion; but it is only when our bodily eyes are finally closed that the eyes of our souls begin to see.

I shall confine myself to one or two remarks more on the impassable bourn which separates instinct from reason. Instinct teaches only the art of preservation and present comfort. But the boundaries of human thought are not confined to the trifling considerations of ease, comfort, and safety, in this mortal condition. We are partakers of the image of God, and possess the wisdom which is capable of contemplating the effects of his Divine perfections. This is the sublime faculty peculiar to the reason of man. The wisest of the inferior creation discover dread and terror when the Almighty sends forth his arrows of liquid flame, and walketh in the majesty of his thunder; but in no in-

stance do they discover admiration. Their impressions terminate in themselves, but they give no evidence of curiosity or investigation. They feel the effect, but they neither understand nor examine the cause. It is reserved for man to look abroad into the creation, to soar above his own feelings, and from the works of God to go onward till he is lost in the splendour of his Almighty Creator. In the comprehensive grasp of reason he takes in the past, the present, and the future, possessing a commanding power over the impressions which he receives, by which he can call them up and combine them as he pleases. He sees the finger of his Maker in every leaf of the forest, in every flower of the field, and learns "to follow nature up to nature's God."

It is most distant from my intention to give you false notions of the dignity of human nature, or to cherish pride in your hearts. But the infinite differ-

ence between the soul of man and the perfections of God is sufficient for the purpose of teaching us humility. But it is a truth not to be concealed, that in the wisdom which we possess in our knowledge of right and wrong, and in our hopes of a future life, God has stamped upon us a portion of his own image, which we shall seek for in vain among the wisest and most docile of the animal creation. We perceive, indeed, the traces of his wisdom conspicuously marked out through every part of his works over universal nature. But in no other instance, except in the reason given to man, are we permitted to contemplate the perfections of the Creator, lent, as it were, to ennoble and dignify his creatures, and all the works of his hands. In all other cases we see the effects, but in this we feel the existence, of the wisdom and power of God. This of itself proves that there is a being of existence in the soul, totally distinct from every thing else



within the reach of our observation in the universe.

The material frame of creation, and the changes produced on it, are regulated by the firm and established laws which the author of nature has imposed. But in that part of creation which inhabits this mortal body, we feel a conducting and governing principle which wills, and reasons, and determines, independently of all restraint, and which, therefore, I conclude to be that immaterial chain which connects us with the Eternal Spirit, and which makes us accountable to him. Rather than maintain or believe that the soul of man is the result of organisation, I would insist upon it, and with as much appearance of reason, that all changes on the material world are effected by arrangements of nature, independent of the wisdom of God—and then what would be the consequence? To a certainty, that my doctrine of materiality would lead me headlong into atheism.

It is, then, of the highest importance to us to entertain just notions of that living principle which animates and guides our conduct as rational beings. The body, which is its first residence, must soon drop into the dust; and it is not till then, as I said before, that the soul begins for herself on the face of the creation. It feels the powers of its own intelligence, and apprehends the wisdom and goodness of God. I believe, that as its clay tabernacle descends slowly and miserably to dissolution, it begins to press through the apertures of its wretched habitation, and judge for itself as mortal judgment decays; but that when the body is lifeless, when the eye is shut for ever, and all communication with external objects ceased, then that power in man which observed the works of God, and which discerned his wisdom in them, springs to a loftier and more sublime existence. Extinguished it can never be, else the Divine perfections would be con-



fined in their operation to the narrow limits in which the soul of man is permitted to view them in this frail and imperfect state. Let us not believe it; let us not ever suppose that the organs of our mortal bodies are the only openings through which we can view the wisdom and works of God. Such a sentiment entertained is too unworthy of the great Eternal Spirit that renovates all nature.

We discover in the minutest, as well as in the most sublime parts of creation, that every motion and every change is an act of wisdom intended to promote the improvement toward perfection of the individual or of the system. We behold every where the wisdom of the means and the perfection of the end; and shall the noblest part of creation, the soul of man, formed for reflection, love, and adoration—shall this boundless capacity of human conception have been formed without an object? Shall this only part of the works of the Almighty which com-

prehends in its nature the ingredients of immortal life, fall like an unheeded flower among the clods of the valley, and produce no corresponding fruit? Let us entertain no such desponding thoughts as these, when every instance of Divine wisdom exhibited in this material world is a proof of our future existence. The house of this tabernacle shall indeed be dissolved, but we have before a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, whose builder and maker is God.

## SERMON VII.

TO PARENTS.

“Train up a child in the way he should go.”

THERE have been so many elaborate treatises written on education, that it will be deemed by many presumption in me to take up the theme. But, as a father, as one who has felt the want of it himself, and seen the effect of it in others, I may be allowed to contribute my mite. I am persuaded, however, that no man alive is able to set down a system that can either be agreeable or profitable to all. There has never been a system on this, or any other subject, since the building of Babel and the confusion of tongues, which has been of the least service to mankind. I would, at any rate, undertake to lead more children, and even more men, by a proverb or by a fable, than by the finest

theory—so put together that the whole were fair and plausible, and the parts exactly proportioned. A man may improve a hint, but he will never do any thing more than admire a system. In some instances, this way of conveying instruction may be amusing and idle; but on the subject of education it may turn out highly pernicious. I do not speak altogether from experience, but I think, as far as morals are concerned, every thing depends upon the character of the parents and the temper of the children; and the first of these has more influence on the second than is generally imagined; and, therefore, the best system on this subject may be utterly useless to any one.

There is one rule, however, which I would give to all parents, and one which is worth a thousand volumes of speculation—and it is this. In training up a child in the way that he should go, be always yourself what you would wish

your child to be. Irascibility on your part will not produce mildness or patience on his. If you are proud, you need not expect him to be humble; and if you are not economical, you may depend on it he will be extravagant. I have seen many ingenious attempts on the part of parents to retain their own vices, and yet deny the practice to their children. It will not do. The principles of religion may be inculcated to cover the deceit, but a man's vices are always better known to his family, than his virtues are to the world. It is best and safest, then, always to give a fair copy to your children, and an example every part of which it will be for their honour and profit to imitate. If you do this, a hint from you will have more influence on their minds than correction would from a parent of a different character.

A parent who is anxious for the virtue of his children should be most careful of his own; and there is no better expedient

to secure and improve it, than to summon his parental affection to its support. If you were not wise enough to love virtue for its own sake, you ought at any rate to practise it, in the minutest observance of its dictates, for the sake of your children. This is one of the peculiar blessings which a parent enjoys if he will but take advantage of it; because without the danger of hypocrisy or the blame of affectation, he may train himself to virtue by habits which discover their usefulness as he continues to cultivate them. He is doubly rewarded; first in his own improvement, and then in the visible effects of his example on those who are dearest to him. Every one attaches a considerable degree of respect to the venerable name of father; and his important charge makes us bear his superior strictness and caution without envy; and we never call him precise even when he descends to the minutiae of fair and honourable conduct. He

has, then, for his own sake, and for the sake of his family, the consent of mankind to be as virtuous as he pleases.

He may always depend upon this, that children are not the last to discover the weakness of their parents. In the first stages of infancy, if you are easily provoked, they will soon find out how far they can go without danger; and if you are easily persuaded, they will tease you into a compliance with their wishes. In the first case they will soon learn to despise you, and in the second to impose on you. The weakness of your temper will be to them the seeds of vice; and what was folly in the constitution of the father will become wickedness in that of the children. Many parents flatter themselves that they will gain the love and affection of their children by indulging their weaknesses; but remember this, that in all the relations of life, the love of parents to their children only excepted, there can be no love where there is not

esteem. Nature, for wise purposes, has made this exception ; but we transgress her immutable laws when we expect a return of love for the same reason that we bestow it. We may just as reasonably expect that our children will not see our failings, because we are blind to theirs. The danger here can only be prevented by firmness and gentleness combined. It is impossible to say how soon your children will respect your character, if you are able to persist in the refusal of that which you do not approve of ; and they will always love you if you treat them as friends. I have no objection to your having an absolute control over them. Let your word be a law irreversible, but let it be a law of kindness. The infant mind will soon prove capricious if it is not steadily directed ; and it is your business never to be capricious in the direction of it. Never explain the reasons of every part of your conduct to your children, or try to make them com-



prehend the propriety and justice of your proceeding; for this is making them parties when they should be taught submission. But I am decidedly of opinion that every part of a parent's conduct should be reasonable and just. It should be capable of bearing investigation, though there be no necessity of explaining it.

What is termed crossness in children is in almost every instance the neglected failing of the parent. It is a weakness which your indulgence creates, and a temper of mind which manifests your own imperfections. Children know when they are under proper authority, and will not go a second time into the fire to burn themselves. But this authority is not gained by explanations, nor yet by measures of constant severity. How ridiculous it is to see love without bounds, and anger without control, struggling for the mastery in the same paternal bosom! and what good fruits can follow from injudicious indulgence and excessive severity?

But in training up a child in the way that he should go, a certain degree of correction may sometimes be necessary; for, though I disapprove of it in general, I dare not altogether condemn it. But it ought never to be applied in any case where a fair and honourable expedient will answer the same end. If you wish to be feared as a tyrant, it will be no difficult matter to force from your family the obedience and submission of slaves. It requires no more than severe chastisement to keep alive the impressions of terror; but the consequence of this is sure to be, that your children will not learn to distinguish between negligence and immorality in themselves, nor between the worst passions and virtue in you. It will oblige them always to counterfeit a character to please you; and by thus constantly wearing a mask, they will become hypocrites through life, or openly vicious when they are no longer afraid of you. It is far the safest way, then, never

to inflict corporeal punishment, unless it be for vice or immorality; for this distinguishing line in your conduct will enable them to see vice and hate it. If you follow this rule, the defects in your children which call for correction will occasion you more grief than anger; and no punishment has so much effect on a young mind as that, which discovers the sorrow and regard of the parent or teacher who inflicts it. Your reluctance demonstrates your love, and, at the same time, the nature and odiousness of the crime for which they suffer; it both corrects them and makes them respect you.

A person trained up with this proper hatred of vice must hate it always. There can be no situation in his future life in which cruelty, falsehood, and injustice will not deeply affect him. His power of conscience, I may say, is formed by the justice or injustice of parental correction. He learns from his infancy to be more grieved with his faults, because they will

offend a friend who loves him, than afraid of the punishment to which they will subject him. How delightfully different is this feeling from that of a child whose whole manners are formed under the frown or rod of his parents, by which every thing may be corrected and yet no habit of virtue formed ! You may depend on it, that those who are found constantly in the wrong, are under a regimen which will never suffer them to be right. If you can cure one defect in the habits or minds of your children in a month, you do them much more good than if you were to condemn and punish a hundred errors in a day. O, how often have I pitied the little screaming victims of parental rage, who every minute hesitated to do right lest it should be censured, and who seemed always under the influence of the same terror, whether they were stupid, or negligent, or vicious ! and I have pitied the parents still more, who deemed this system the perfection

of a good education. Let the recollection of punishment be always connected with the idea of vice, and you will prevent that confusion in the minds of your children, which will infallibly destroy their virtue.

It is too true that you may easily convert a fault into an immorality, by being severely strict in the tasks which you appoint; and then it becomes difficult for children to judge between negligence and disobedience. On this very point thousands of the rising generation are daily ruined. The parents begin by making negligence in this restricted sense a crime, and one that deserves punishment; then the tutor, subsequently, has scarcely another idea than to make all virtue consist in attention to his instructions, and all vice in the neglect of them. The best part of youth is spent in sowing the seeds of vanity, and the harvest afterwards is pedantry or vice. One would think, from this mode of education, that

learning and taste were alone sufficient to make men humble, just, and affectionate; and that provided they know a great deal, that is, plenty of words, for which they never have any use, it is not thought of any importance although they never be taught to do any thing. You will best avoid these dangers by taking the virtues of your children into your own hands. Never trust this important part of education to your master of languages, for the copy must be set by yourself. You must hold their hand, you must praise their improvement, you must hold up to them the perfect standard which they are to imitate, if you wish to receive comfort from them, and to be honoured by them in your old age.

Every kind of learning necessary to a man's profession may in his youth be made subservient to his virtue. I do not mean that mathematical or classical studies have any thing in themselves to direct our future conduct in life, but



honourable emulation, unaffected humility, and industrious habits, may be acquired, in training the mind to knowledge, with more effect than in using it to its necessary purposes after it is acquired. From this statement you will easily perceive my opinion to be, that the rod is pernicious to virtue; compulsion never forms a habit, but rather adds a disagreeable restraint to a natural aversion. The free voluntary application of the mind from generous motives is blunted, and at length extinguished by the fear of punishment; and we can never suppose that sullen submission is humility.

Since I began this essay I have perused several printed plans of education, but they are merely scenes of romance; and to train up a family by such plans is impracticable. They suppose feeling and attention on the part of parents which are not to be found in the world; and gratitude and the expression of it on the part of the peasantry in the neighbour-

hood, which are equally imaginary. The picture is calculated to engage the minds of the young and the sanguine. It is beautiful to read and to contemplate; but then it is overcharged and not in nature. It is in vain to look for the original; and yet those who have been accustomed to feel by representations, and to form their ideas of the lower classes from books, will be dreadfully disappointed when they come to the trial; the very coarseness of their expressions never fails to disgust a well-polished mind.

There are certain fine feelings which compel the owners to weep at a tragedy, and there are others of a more common but more delicate nature, which induce the holders to soothe the afflicted; and it is a curious fact, that can hardly be accounted for on philosophical principles, that men are most subject to the former sort of feeling, and the fair sex to the latter. This is the most beautiful and interesting trait in the character of wo-



man ; there is no scene of distress from which she will shrink, if her aid can afford any amelioration to the sufferer. This is the feeling, this is the character, which I beseech you to implant in the minds of your children from their earliest years ; but as I hold it an infallible maxim that example is better than precept, if you wish to bring up your children in the way that they should go, make them acquainted with men as they are, and, at any rate, attentive to all the poor and distressed within your reach ; and this will infallibly teach your children the virtue of humanity.

Notwithstanding all that has been said in the tales for children, it is the common complaint of gentlemen residing in the country, that the poor whom they relieve are very rarely grateful for the attention paid to them. And they say farther, that they find as much chicanery and cunning in the humblest stations of life as they do at court. I do not choose to enter into this,

though I am rather disposed to believe, that human nature, diversified in its modes as it is, must still be the same in substance every where. But I am certain, if you do not think of balancing your account of kindness with gratitude received, you will infallibly be respected by your poor neighbours: the manner in which they approach you and speak to you and of you will make a favourable impression on the minds of your children; they will be early habituated to the modes and expressions of homely gratitude, and to respect honesty, though it should not be dressed in a fashionable garb. There will, doubtless, be instances in which your kindness will not be repaid as it deserves; but you must beware of allowing the irritation of your mind to lead you to general censure against the common ranks of mankind in the presence of your family. Children enter more easily into the resentments of their parents than any thing else, and if you

teach them to resent in the mass, pride and haughtiness in their future demeanour will be the fruits of your instructions. Kindness, therefore, to men of inferior rank, taking care to avoid every appearance of undue familiarity, is the true medium of conduct to steer by.

The principal use of a man of fortune and influence in society appears to me to be this very thing, to accommodate himself to the wants and distresses of the poor and afflicted. He lives to little purpose if he does not communicate the blessings he has bountifully received. He is neither possessed of good taste, nor capable of happiness, if he is ignorant of the pleasure resulting from benevolence. God has distinguished you by fortune, honour, and power, then think of the gratitude incumbent on you, and at the same time of the great good which it lies in your power to do. Your attention to the poor will be rewarded by the most grateful feelings of humanity, and by the dispositions and

habits which you give to your children, in training them up in the way that they should go.

I maintain, then, as I did formerly, that good morals, good breeding, and a tendency to kindness of heart and benevolence, are the cream and essential parts of good education. The daily repetition of the best precepts of morality, whether they be conveyed in the shape of a maxim or a proverb, are insufficient to form the infant mind to the standard of parental expectation. Mankind in every period of their existence are directed more by habit than by precept; this is a leading truth which I have observed in myself, my brethren, and most intimate acquaintances. Man is, in fact, more the child of habit than any other creature, and the study of it is curious and interesting. A few instances, which have come under my own observation, may be amusing to the reader, without interfering with the thread of discourse, as a parson or perhaps a dean might say.

As instances, then, children are all fond of sugar and sweetmeats, but try them with tobacco or ardent spirits, they are poison to them; but yet by habit to what a height do the passions for these arrive! I knew a man, Adam Neil, who went into Edinburgh as an apprentice to an apothecary, and his circumstances compelling him to take the cheapest lodgings he could get, he took a room above a smith's, which no other person would take, at two shillings a-week; but what with the continual pelting on the stithy, and the roar of the bellows and fire, poor Neil could get no sleep, nor, when his landlady or any other body entered the room, hear a word they said, and, in consequence, he got a habit of speaking so loud, that even in the shop his voice was heard through all the street. Every night and every morning poor Neil cursed that smithy, and his great ambition on earth was to be enabled to change his lodgings. He got at length a superior situation, and

the first thing he did was to change his lodgings, and take two elegant rooms in Richmond Place, after having occupied his old room for eleven years. But the eternal clink of the smithy was wanting, and not one wink could Adam Neil sleep in his new lodgings. For seven nights he declared, in my hearing, that he did not sleep seven minutes. He said, he sometimes prayed, and sometimes swore unto himself, but sleep had utterly departed from his eyes, so that on the eighth day he was obliged to go and beg his old lodgings back again, and there he still remained when I knew him, a rich, hearty, jovial, loud-speaking old fellow.

My own experience how much man is the child of habit, is more simple, but to the same purpose. I lived two years at Elibank, the most quiet and sequestered place in Scotland; from that I went to Willenslee, where a loud roaring stream ran close by the back of the stable where I lay. For a fortnight, I am sure,



I did not sleep two hours, but then I made up for it by day, wrapped in my plaid, among the heather. From that, after two years, I went to another quiet remote place, but no sleep could I enjoy for many a day for want of the lullaby of Willenslee burn. There was a small burn passed at a little distance from my bed, and I was wont to raise my head and listen to the delightful hush.

Now this quality of forming the mind by habit is more visible in infancy than in any other period of life. The minds of children are not capable of reasoning on the expediency and excellency of any rule laid down. They may love virtue for its own sake, but they are not ever able to calculate on the inconveniences of to-morrow, when they are under the influence of a motive which at the present moment engrosses their attention. The most impressive discourses on the beauty of virtue are entirely unregarded by them, and yet, singular as it may ap-

pear, you will find more parents and instructors of youth attempting to reason them into goodness, than forming their habits by mild discipline and example. But this is a confession on the part of the teacher, that it is easier to point out the road than to walk in it, or perhaps it is the mere vanity of speaking about what he cannot so easily perform. But if you wish to train up your child in the way that he should go, be careful to take the path before him.

There is one thing you should always remember, that the little traits of character which are formed in youth uniformly turn out to be the virtues or vices of old age. If your children respect you for your virtues, and love you with a pure and sincere affection, you may be assured that the same affection will expand to all the connexions which they will afterward form in the world. If they are in the habit of submitting implicitly to your will without murmuring, they will be prepared



to submit early and easily to all the restraints which the laws of God and man have imposed on wickedness; or, if you have accustomed them from their infancy to fill up their time in some useful and agreeable employment, they will be sober and industrious to the end of their lives. It is on this account that women, if they are not afterward spoiled by seeing too much of good company and the gay world, are more correct and delicate in their manners than men. On the other hand, if your children are impatient under disappointment, eager for happiness, but soon tired of the pursuit of it by the only path in which it is to be found — if they be fickle in their affections and ungovernable in their tempers,—you may allow your best friends to predict, that when they become men and women they will be selfish, proud, insolent, and unrestrained in their actions, and that they have not when children been trained up in the way that they should go.

Always consider, then, that on your present conduct depends the future happiness and respectability of your family. You are now training young fruit-trees to a wall, and as long as the twigs are limber and pliant, your task is easy and delightful, but if you allow them to shoot up to strong branches, you will have much to lop off; and with great labour, if you can do it at all, will you ever be able to bend or direct them to your wish. You are breeding up flowers of immortality, and what will be your reckoning at the last day if you do not train them up in the way that they should go!

Nature, for the wisest of purposes, has withheld the strong and ungovernable passions till we are approaching to manhood. It is doubtless to give to parents who are interested in the welfare of their children a reasonable time for their instruction, and instilling right principles, before the violent passions of manhood begin their powerful sway. The passions.

of children are indeed keen and fretful, especially if not kept under the rein, but they are much more easily restrained and governed than the unbridled passions of youth. Children are impelled by the desire of acquisition, not of enjoyment, in missing of which they feel disappointment; but no inward craving for a sinful gratification. It is obviously easy at this period of life, if you are at the pains to do it, to give the young idea any direction or habit you please; and shall you not be rewarded for your trouble, when you consider that the moderation and command of themselves which you now give them will be the best bulwark and defence against the turbulent passions which they will have to combat, and which, less or more, lie in the path of every individual of the human race?

I have now the charge of a considerable, and, I hope, amiable and virtuous family, and if I had the charge of ten, I should govern them by the simple laws

which would be sufficient to direct mankind, if they were wiser and more virtuous than they are. Generosity would be the great virtue I should reward. Injustice, falsehood, cruelty, and ingratitude, would be almost the only crimes I should punish. With unremitting and steady attention to the different tempers and abilities of my pupils, I should promote in them the habits of industry, the bowels of kindness, and the virtues of patience and humility; and in every step of their progress I should teach them to love God for his goodness to the fallen race of Adam, to walk in his ways, and to understand his word.

The first principles of moral virtue being thus established in the youthful heart, I am at a great loss what plan of general instruction to recommend. I know it will be regarded by many as total want of experience and discernment; but, as a pupil of nature, I must speak out my sentiments. I have a great

aversion to college education ; indeed, I hold it in utter contempt—and sorry am I that it should be regarded as necessary towards the entering on any of the learned professions ; for why a young man who, by private tuition and diligence, has rendered himself, on examination, equal or superior to any of the collegians, is not considered capable of performing the same duties, it is above my capacity to comprehend. But having said thus far that I despise a college education, I must give you some reasons for it.

In the first place, then, I never saw any young men the better for it. The things taught are too abstruse for common comprehension, and altogether unsuitable to the young men, as far as I could judge, having no relation whatever to the circumstances and manner of life in which they were afterwards to be engaged. I have listened to many lectures of the most able professors, and it is perfectly obvious to me that they are of no avail

whatever to the students, but just go in at the one ear and out at the other, or fall like the treasures of the sky on the firm flint. And it strikes me, that our colleges having been founded and established so long ago, they were designed purely or chiefly for the sake of that theology which was then in vogue, being either totally or in part calculated for the disputes and wranglings of divines, and of no use whatever to the lawyer or physician, and still less to the merchant and gentleman. Some of the classes bear evident marks of this design, and among them I have no hesitation in reckoning logic and philosophy. On these, I am told, nearly two whole sessions are consumed at the university, and, as far as I can judge, they must, to the greater part of students, be perfectly unintelligible; and, if they could be understood, I cannot for my life discover their use, unless it be to promote materialism, and ultimately atheism.



Nature has made all the chief pleasures of life, and all knowledge which is generally useful, easy of attainment. Would men but be at the pains to study and observe this, they would soon discover what is the sort of knowledge they should acquire and teach. But it has unluckily happened, that many who ought to have been wiser, have ever neglected that knowledge which is obvious and useful, and have puzzled their brains to unravel what is difficult, metaphysical, and useless. From the difficulty they find in acquiring it, they conclude that it must be important, and they lay out their whole exertions in delivering it to others; but if these learned gentlemen would but take a little notice of what is passing before them in the world, they would easily see the utter unprofitableness of what they magnify so much. As instances, then, I aver, that in no company of gentlemen is metaphysics or the logic of the schools ever mentioned—that no gentle-

man by the deepest skill in them will ever make a better figure at the bar or in the House of Commons—his eloquence in the pulpit will never be the more persuasive by the study of them—he will never understand the animal economy the better, nor will the study of metaphysics in particular ever give him a higher relish of virtue, or enable him to act with greater propriety in life.

It may be argued that these are merely aphorisms of my own; but I would like to see the man that could contradict them, and, at the same time, keep within the range of common sense. If these are admitted, then why must acquirements that are so confessedly of no use, and that are never so much as talked of in good company, waste two years of a young man's time, as well as his means, which are frequently not over-abundant? Life is not so long, nor time of so little value, that it should be consumed in useless studies, and in studies which any



well-bred gentleman would be ashamed to have it even suspected that he had ever employed his thoughts about. I am sorry to say, but I am certain, that if the time some, nay, many, young men spend at the university so absurdly, in hearing crabbed questions and metaphysical jargon, were spent in the study of ancient and modern history, astronomy, and geography, they would be much better accomplished, and appear so in the judgment of every one with whom they conversed. Therefore, in training up a child in the way that he should go, I should never recommend to him the study of logic or metaphysics.

The disquisitions which I myself have heard on that grand unfathomable thing MORAL VIRTUE, appeared to me to be deplorably absurd. The disputes are so abstruse, and their disputes about the foundations of morality so different, that it is impossible to know who is right or who wrong; therefore, I think we

may take it for granted that they are all wrong together, and not one of them is of any necessity or use. One contends that morality is founded on the will of God ; another, in conformity to truth ; a third, in the fitness or unfitness, or in the eternal and unalterable relations or differences of things ; a fourth, in a moral sense or discernment, supposed to be natural to the human mind ; another establishes his system on sympathy. Harmless but absurd principles ! “ Words ! words ! ” as Hamlet says.

But the worst thing of all is, that whatever scheme the professor of moral philosophy contrives or embraces, he uses a long train of thin, metaphysical reasoning to establish that, and spends a great part of the year in laying down arguments for, and answering objections against, his particular system. These arguments may, perhaps, be very pleasing to him, and perhaps tangible, too, from long familiarity ; but they are by far too subtile to

be understood by his pupils, and leave no more impression on the mind than the eagle does on the air.

I wonder if ever a moral philosopher, in training up his child in the way that he should go, sent him to that class with the high sounding title and the body of air. I should think not, for I do not know an instance. I shall here put a few simple questions to that sublime class of men the MORAL PHILOSOPHERS, having an eye, meantime, for the answers from a highly - esteemed friend of my own. Might not these nice disquisitions about the foundations of morality be left out, and the students be just as knowing, as good, and as wise? Are any of them really able to comprehend such arguments, or make the least use of them? Might not the time be better spent in teaching them morality, by explaining the nature of the particular virtues? Would not this be more adapted to the capacity of the students, and incompar-

ably more useful to them through the whole of life? Ought you not, then, to descend to that simple mode of teaching, instead of torturing the invention to establish what is of no avail whether it be established or not? There are undoubtedly many objects, the nature of which may be easily understood, although it is vain to search after their origin. What would you think of the merchant who, when he came to the mouth of a large river, should persist in not unloading his cargo until he had traced the river to its fountain?

I may be wrong, and shall be very glad to be set right; but I have come to the conclusion, that whatever be the foundation of morality, the nature of the particular virtues may easily be described. Young men are capable of understanding them, though not able to enter into the abstruse investigations about the origin of moral virtue. To know what virtue is, and to distinguish between that and evil,

is useful to men in every station of life, but the subtile disputes about its origin are really out of the question. I should account the learned professor a wise man who should keep these to himself; or he might, for his own particular comfort and satisfaction, communicate all his knotty ideas to the one of his pupils who has most connexion with leading men, and has the least chance of being recommended as his successor, and who will most likely think himself obliged to be at immense labour to destroy the moral theory of his predecessor. It would, indeed, be hard to say what one duty of society, or what one office as a citizen, a student is qualified to sustain, after spending his money and the best of his life at a college.

Finally, I suspect that the whole parade of college education is a mere jumble of confusion. I am not so inveterate as Burns, who said of the students, "They gang in stirks, an' come out asses;" but I

have often seen them come out so pedantic, that they were perfectly intolerable; and, save a little in the delightful studies of botany and chemistry, not one hair improved. Matters can't be otherwise; the professors are too fond of rank, and keep at too great a distance from their scholars, ever to find out the genius or particular turn of mind of any one of them, so as to discover what business will suit him, and what books he should read. And, moreover, the youths are obliged to attend far too many classes at once. I have known hundreds who attended five classes every day, and on expostulating with some of them on the absurdity of it, they said they could not help it without being obliged to remain some years longer at college. Now, is it not manifest that this must render the young men's minds one crude and unleavened mass of confusion?

In breeding up your children in the way that they should go, then, the first

thing I most strenuously recommend is, the setting them a good example, and training them up in the fear, nurture, and admonition of the Lord. Teach them to know the value of a good education, and to be grateful to those who are spending their time in the improvement of their minds and morals; to correct all the irregularities of their temper by the sweet influences of Christian charity; to be respectful to their superiors, kind to their inferiors and equals, and benevolent to all mankind; and both the blessing of the Almighty, and the respect of their brethren of mankind, will accompany them all the days of their lives.

## SERMON VIII.

VIRTUE THE ONLY SOURCE OF HAPPINESS.

“ Happy is that people whose God is the Lord.”

ALL mankind are posting on in search of happiness both in this life and that which is to come, and all taking different routes to find it; but if they would keep this maxim of the Psalmist engraved on their hearts, to take the Lord only for their God, they would be so directed that they could not miss it; but we have so many idols of ambition in this world, that, alas! how few of us take the Lord solely for our God, and his blessed word for our rule and direction. In a great city, on a Sabbath-day, it is matter of serious contemplation to see all the people posting away, with serious faces, seeking the road to heaven, and all going different ways to find it. It is piteous to hear certain sec-



tarians preach and believe that there is no salvation to be had out of their own community. I pity all such followers of the meek and lowly Jesus; for if we seek him with all our hearts, according to the monitor which he has placed in every human bosom, then we are all flowers of the Almighty's garden, and though of different hues, shall all bloom together with him in Paradise.

In revolving in my mind this grand subject of universal pursuit, I have often been led to think that there is more written upon it, more rules laid down, and more avenues opened, than were actually necessary to direct the whole human race to the grand summit of their wishes. And yet I don't know how it is, but in my long journey through life, I have scarcely met with any man who was fully content with his condition, and who did not think he had greater cause of complaint than rejoicing. Man is a strange compound of vanity and selfishness. There is no

deception which we more generally practise than that of trying to appear easy and comfortable in our circumstances, and yet there are no topics so generally expatiated on as our vast disappointments, misfortunes, and afflictions. What can be the source of these conflicting elements in the human composition ? for that they really exist is quite apparent. The truth is, that man, with all his great capabilities, is a perplexed knot, which it is impossible to untie.

There are, I acknowledge, a sufficient store of evils in every man's life to embitter his comfort and to poison the springs of his enjoyment. Were the nauseous draught to remain always on the palate, no man could be happy. Were we always to reflect on them, it were impossible that any splendour of situation, or abundance of comforts, could counterbalance the probable impending strokes which tomorrow, or at most, in some few years, may humble us to the dust, separate us

from our friend, or visit us with some of the thousand ills that flesh is heir to.

But the human mind is so peculiarly framed as to forget the past, and conceal the future; and were it otherwise, it would be in vain either to speak or think of human happiness. The wisdom of Divine Providence is conspicuous in adapting our habits of thought and reflection to the situation in which we are placed. Thus, no experience of danger, no reflection on past suffering, nor even the assurance that our death must necessarily happen in a few years, can hinder us from enjoying the present moment.

Before proceeding further, I must lay it down as a first principle, that those pursuits and enjoyments which are best calculated to promote our happiness are within the reach of every man, and that the whole art is to be able to seize upon and improve them. The precarious subsistence of a child of Providence does not destroy his contentment and happiness,

and the greatest abundance of the rich does not moderate their desires. A man's happiness does not at all consist in the multitude of the good things which he possesses. We have no need to apply the colouring of language in comparing the affluence of the nobleman with the simple enjoyments of the peasant. The scene is every day exhibited to our view, and we cannot withhold our senses from perceiving, that nature has provided the means of contentment in the humblest conditions of life. Some may imagine, and many do imagine, that those who are placed in mean and inferior stations must be miserable, seeing the ease and plenty of the rich around them. But the case is for the most part reversed, and we often find more genuine and unaffected happiness in the cot than in the palace.

For upwards of twenty years I have mixed with all classes of society, and as I never knew to which I belonged, I have been perfectly free and at my ease with

them all. But I have always been suspicious of the happiness of the great. We only see the favourable side of things there, that side which vanity tempts them to display ; but in the shepherd's cot we see nature pure and unsophisticated, and all the kindly affections of the human heart freely given vent to ; and whether it be that my best days were spent among the shepherds—the days of youth, love, and gaiety, the reflection on which is delightful—I know not, but I have always looked on them as the most happy of any. They have none of the jealousies or incumbrances of the higher rank. Theirs is a state of narrow independence, fluctuating indeed, but then they know very early each year what their income will be, and rule their family expenses accordingly. The shepherd is moreover the ward of Heaven, and he knows and feels it, and bends always with a composed submission to the decrees of Divine Providence. That daily feeling naturally im-

pressed on his mind, that all his comforts are entirely in the hand of Him that rules the elements, contributes not a little to that firm spirit of devotion for which the Scottish shepherd is distinguished. I know of no scene so impressive as that of a family sequestered in a lone glen, during the times of the winter storms and floods ; and where is the glen in the kingdom that wants such a habitation ? there are they left to the protection of Heaven, and they know and feel it. Nothing is to be seen but the conflict of the elements, nor heard but the raving of the storm. Then, before retiring to rest, he kneels, with all his little dependent group around, and commits himself and them to the protection of Heaven ; and though their little hymn of praise can scarcely be heard by themselves as it mixes with the roar of the tempest, they never fail to arise from their devotions with their spirits cheered, and their confidence renewed, and go to sleep with an exaltation of mind of which



kings and conquerors have no share. There is a sublimity in the very idea. There they live, as it were, inmates of the cloud and the storm; but they stand in a relationship to the Ruler of those which neither time nor eternity can ever cancel. Wo to him who would weaken the bonds with which true Christianity connects us with Heaven and with one another!

In taking a general view of the conditions of the rich and the poor, we see the former look with contempt on those pure and simple enjoyments of nature, or perhaps a kind female heart may feel regret for them; but they are beyond the reach of such; they never can taste them. But the poor man can witness all the preparations for a great man's table, and the infinite multitude of his comforts, without either envy, or reflection on the providence of God, but is rather disposed to pity them. Let no one, then, estimate the amount of a man's happiness by the

extent of his riches and enjoyments, but rather try them by the rule of inverse proportion. Depend on it, happiness is nearest to those who are least distracted by a multitude of wants.

I believe that no man with a very large fortune or estate can be truly happy. It is a strange enigma, but it is true, that he feels no wants but the want of happiness in those very blessings which other men covet. I believe that the nobleman is happier than his sovereign ; I believe that the farmer is happier than his lord ; and I believe that a truly virtuous servant is the happiest of all.

The principal reason for this seems to be, that what costs us dearest we are sure to estimate highest. We receive the choicest gifts of Providence with indifference unless they are obtained with difficulty. The sweetest dishes, the richest wines, the softest beds, cloy the appetite, unless they are obtained with some difficulty, — nay, *only* cloy the appetite and



fatigue the senses of him who can always procure them. There is infinitely more enjoyment in that state in which relaxation is festivity, in which the coarsest food has the seasoning—and in this rests happiness. Now, in this particular the poor man has greatly the advantage over the rich, who has no occasion and is under no obligation to labour. He has certain stated periods, after short intervals, at which his enjoyments return; and they are the sweeter, that he has laboured to procure them. This is happiness which never cloy, which brings along with it its full measure of contentment, and which does not distract its possessor, either by a multitude of objects or by unsubstantial hopes.

A man born to a large fortune has his relish for true enjoyment corrupted from his infancy. He has no restraints on his pursuits after happiness, except those which convince him, at the same time, that it is not to be found. His extensive pos-

sessions only diminish hope, without supplying contentment. We ought, then, to deliberate calmly and seriously, whether it would add to our comforts to have every wish of our hearts gratified as soon as it is formed. Let us consult our reason and experience, and say whether disappointment in some things, and expectation in others, are not necessary ingredients in human happiness. The more that fortune places us above danger and want, the less qualified are we to enjoy her favours. Abundance may increase, but never can remove chagrin and disappointment; it even makes them more intolerable in proportion as we might have avoided them, while the ease with which we may command enjoyment, opens to us endless prospects of pleasure, which we can never realise. Virtue and truth, and taking the Lord for our God, are the sole guides to genuine happiness.

The text contains very much in it; no less than the whole range of religion,

virtue, and philosophy. But the latter, in my opinion, would have gained a more important end, and furthered the two former more, if it had given us the history, instead of the speculations, of the philosopher. Would it not be better if the authors on this subject were to furnish us with the pictures of their own mind and the sources of their own comforts, rather than fix on any one thing in which they fondly suppose happiness to consist?—because, if they are not happy, why should they write on it? When a man tells me that true felicity consists in the abundance of the possessions of life, he gives me no other information than that he is poor and discontented. If he places it in the sweets of pure and disinterested friendship, he has either been unfortunate in the choice of his friends, or did not deserve the friendship of the good. If he places it in the joys of requited love, he only lets me know that he is either a monk or a wretched old bachelor, who regrets the

loss of pure female affection, vanished for ever. Rely, then, on this—that if fair virtue be not the theme of his commendation, he can never direct you on the way to happiness; for he himself hath never found it,—he only knows what it is to be miserable by the stings of a troubled conscience for virtues neglected, religion despised, and felicity lost.

This great chief good, then, which we all labour so eagerly to obtain, is as common as the water we drink, the air we breathe, or the most common food that supports us. It is to be found in every station of life, and neither poverty, nor pain, nor sickness, can deprive us of it; nor can a prison keep it out; nor have crowns nor palaces any thing in themselves by which they can let it. We find the human mind naturally disposed to enjoy happiness in the most trying circumstances; even the scaffold and the stake are dreadful only when painted in imagination, the suffering being then contrasted

with the enjoyments which we wish not to relinquish, or with the prospects which fancy has decked out in her gayest colours. But how often has the guilty met the stroke of inevitable death without shrinking, the penitent with patience and resignation, and the martyr with joy! Yet, if it be true that a contrition without hope does not invariably depress the mind, it may be granted, on the other hand, that circumstances the most favourable, and prospects the most flattering, cannot always produce cheerfulness and contentment; but, on the contrary, we are so much the creatures of our own feelings, that, without pretending in the least to be paradoxical, I think, as formerly hinted, that ease and plenty and rank are the greatest enemies to true happiness. It is that fleeting shadow which eludes the grasp of him who seems to have it in his power, while it so frequently lurks unseen, though not unfelt, around the cold hearths of the poor and the unfortunate. It is far easier

to acquire the virtue of contentment with little than with much; for God, in his all-wise providence, frequently gives a large share of temporal blessings only to shew their vanity. Let those contradict me who build houses and plant vineyards, who lay house to house, and field to field, and who withhold nothing from the capricious cravings of their appetites. Alas! their condition both in life and death testifies how little all earthly substance is calculated to insure happiness here, or direct us in the way to it hereafter. It is all vanity and vexation of spirit; and the words and the reflections of the wise man are literally true—"I hated all my labour that I had taken under the sun, because I should leave it to the man that shall be after me; and who knows whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom and knowledge and joy; but to the sinner he giveth travail to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that



is good before God." "There is one alone, and there is not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor yet is there end of all his labour; neither is his eye satisfied with riches, neither saith he, For whom do I labour and bereave my soul of good? This is also vanity; yea, it is a sore travail."

Take, then, the great King of Israel as a monitor. Who ever acquired such riches, glory, and extent of dominion, as he? And yet he declared them all to be vanity and vexation of spirit; and so it will ever prove to him who spends his whole life in the pursuit, and never thinks of the enjoyment. Perhaps Solomon by this time foresaw the ruin of all the great things he had done, and the partition of his empire; since, notwithstanding the wives, concubines, and virgins that he had, he left but one son, and he was a fool.

But I have still a greater than Solomon, to whom I must now appeal. Our blessed Lord and Saviour began his moral in-

structions to men, by giving definitions of happiness, and shewing where it is to be found. He confines it, indeed, to no condition of life; his views are new and extraordinary; but they decisively demonstrate his knowledge of the human heart, and the abundance of that wisdom of God that dwelt in him. His instructions are, Be detached from the world, be humble, be meek, be just, be merciful, be pure, be patient, and you will be happy. These virtues are confined to no situation; they are the sources of internal peace, and he connects them with the prospects of eternity.

We have thus seen that happiness is more generally diffused, and more easily secured, than those who pursue it too keenly imagine. There is a predisposition to it in the minds of most men, which is defeated only by their eagerness to obtain it: it is good for a man to be employed in a virtuous or even trivial pursuit; but let him never be employed



in the pursuit of happiness, for this gift of Heaven can only be found in the enjoyment of the present moment. If we run after it, we not only make this melancholy confession, that we are not in possession of it, but we shew that we are not likely to be so. The question, then, to every man is, not whether he looks forward to something unattained as the foundation of his comfort on earth, but if he is to be happy at all—whether there is something in his active duties to fill up his time, and something in the blessings which he enjoys to soothe and charm his mind in his present condition. This is actually that good which he can find under the sun; and if any additional comfort shall intrude itself on the plan of his life, he will enjoy it the more for not expecting it. Solomon's moral philosophy is to me better than the whole that has been produced since; and it is long since I had it all by heart. The following maxim is three times repeated,

nearly in the same terms, in his works :  
“ There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God.”

I am far from recommending to any one that insipid indifference of mind which enjoys not pleasure, or that apathy which regards not pain ; for this indolence of mind is happiness without enjoyment. I consider a certain keenness of disposition, prompting to the most active exertions, as the first ingredient in the happiness of man. Whoever possesses this sort of temper, I advise him to plant, to sow, to read, write, publish — even though it were sermons ; to build, hunt, angle, travel, or sail—in short, to do any thing to keep his mind engaged ; but never to hunt after happiness, or set the ardour of his mind upon that. In all the other pursuits he may find a share of happiness ; but by herself she is not to be

caught : as well may we loose a pack of hounds to hunt the eagle. But make the Lord your God. Bow to his will in all things, and take his word for the rule of your life, and you shall be happy.

Were I to give you a philosophical definition of the word happiness, I would say that it is the mind and the object in full possession of one another. A man's life will be always pleasant, if he enter with all his heart and soul into the concerns of it. "Whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might ; for there is neither knowledge nor device in the grave whither we are all hastening."

But remember this is the ardour of pursuit which I recommend, not the keenness of enjoyment. I only say, that in virtuous and active engagements you will find happiness where you never expected to find it. Almost without your knowledge, the means will be connected with the end, and you will gain the prize

before you have reached your imaginary goal. Take an example from childhood, which is allowed by all to be the happiest period of life. If this be true, it is merely on account that children find an object of pursuit in every thing that presents itself, and then they pursue it with such ardour! If men choose to take the same road, they will continue the happiness of childhood to their latest years, with the additional satisfaction which the choice of reason and the approbation of conscience will impart. But the minds of children are free and light as air, and with them no care obtrudes itself on an anxious heart; the pains of yesterday leave no impression, and to-morrow is an hundred years before. Did you ever hear of a man in a fox-chase thinking of yesterday or to-morrow? Let us, therefore, be engaged in the chase of wisdom and the chase of virtue. Let our duties, our actions, and our amusements, still be the objects of our eager pursuit; and,

with the Lord for our God and guide, we shall never be unhappy.

There is a nice combination of activity and indifference which, when acquired by due attention, or mixed up in the constitution, forms, perhaps, the very height of human felicity; at least, it contains the ingredients which, if well used, compose it. It consists of activity in the pursuit and indifference to the object. It gives the good in hand without the danger of disappointment; and consists of eagerness and ardour without anxiety. This state of mind is the power of seizing the happy moment at once, without waiting till time shall wear away the traces of sorrow. This seeming contradiction is easy to him who suppresses vain hopes, and who derives from every duty and occupation of life the sum of what it can give.

It is a melancholy truth, that in our character, the fancy and imagination which painted the delights of the future

scene embitter the present moment. If we had not overlaid the picture with too much high colouring, we might have enjoyed life as it is. We should have learned in this checkered scene to extract sweet from bitterness, instead of rejecting the cup, because the ingredients in it are not mingled to our taste ; but energy in our pursuits destroys the illusions of imagination, and never fails to direct us at last to the right goal.

With God all things are possible ; and if, on one hand, the vanity of riches is illustrated by the miseries of the rich, on the other, it happens, perhaps, once in a hundred years, that a singular character gives us a conspicuous example both of the use and enjoyment of riches, in securing his own happiness and promoting that of others. But, without all doubt, happiness is most frequently found, and most sweetly enjoyed, where the curse and bitterness of plenty have never been known by experience ; therefore, it is



better to seize on it when we can, than to be disappointed when we think we have it in our power.

But hope, blessed hope, is still the polar star that points the way to happiness; for there is no doubt that every earthly thing is more delicious in the prospect than the enjoyment; and this delightful beacon shines for ever before the eye of the soul, burning brighter and brighter to the last, and brightest of all on the verge of the grave. I consider that all our enjoyments would be nothing if we were deprived of hope. It is the distinguished and peculiar gift of God to man — a gift which confers present enjoyment, while the blessing is in expectation. Think of the poet, the artist, the player, and many others, how they feed on the ambrosia of hope! and, after all, they derive much more pleasure from this feast of the imagination, than they are hurt afterward by the disappointment of their hopes. It is a melancholy

want of fancy to build your castle on one cloud—to fix your sole attention on one object, and yet to be miserable because you cannot vary the picture which your imagination had painted.

But allowing that the approach of old age weakens the imagination and destroys the illusions of fancy, yet I am not the less persuaded that it is more possible to be contented with disappointed hopes, than with disappointment in enjoyment. It is more pleasant in any stage of life to be satisfied with little, than to be so unfortunate as to have possessions which cannot satisfy you. The brow of an old man is generally clouded in proportion to his riches. This is a great evil under the sun. Along with the infirmities incident to the last stage of life, a rich man has the melancholy want of relish for all the blessings which his fortune should procure; every thing is wrong and out of place; every body



around him is to blame ; and the man is miserable. He has the means but not the power of enjoyment. He has found what the world is on trial, and complains of it with disgust.

But if riches bring no corresponding enjoyment equal to the expectation, how does it happen that so many are in the anxious and unremitting pursuit to have the greatest share of them ? The answer is easy and obvious. In every station we think that we may be, or ought to be, happier than we are. Nothing being more likely to realise the scenes of bliss which we fancy in prospect, than abundance of the things which we want, it is quite natural to covet and pursue the riches by which they may be acquired. Miserable beings that we are ! we never know that we are pursuing a shadow until we try to grasp it, and find we have nothing. Alexander wept when he had no more worlds to conquer ; and,

on the same principle, the rich man is unhappy because he has every thing to enjoy, and nothing to expect.

I am an old man, and, of course, my sentiments are those of an old man ; but I am not like one of those crabbed philosophers who rail at the state which they cannot reach ; for in sincerity of heart I believe that hitherto no man has enjoyed a greater share of felicity than I have. It is well known in what a labyrinth of poverty and toil my life has been spent ; but I never repined ; for when subjected to the greatest and most humiliating disdain and reproaches, I always rejoiced in the consciousness that I did not deserve them. I have rejoiced in the prosperity of my friends, and have never envied any man's happiness. I have never intentionally done evil to any living soul ; and knowing how little power I had to do good to others, I never missed an opportunity that came within the reach of my capacity to do it. I have not only been satisfied, but

most thankful to the Giver of all good, for my sublunary blessings, the highest of all for a grateful heart that enjoys them; and I have always accustomed myself to think more on what I have than on what I want. I have seen but little of life, but I have looked minutely into that little; and I assure you, on the faith of a poet and a philosopher, that I have been able to trace the miseries and misfortunes of many of my friends solely to the situation in which they were placed, and which other men envied; and I never knew a man happy with a great fortune, who would not have been much happier without it. Nor did I ever know a vicious person, or one who scoffed at religion, happy. He goes always on from bad to worse; and I was sorry to find in the metropolis so many of a wretched set of politicians not only deists but gross blasphemers. O, my soul! come not thou into their secret; into their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united. Finally,

without virtue there can be no true happiness ; and if ever there was a light kindled to direct man to happiness, both here and hereafter, it is the divine revelation. Happy is that people whose God is the Lord.

## SERMON IX.

## MARRIAGE.

“It is better to marry than to burn.”

THERE are two sides of the question to be examined here; more particularly as one part of Scripture is often at a little variance with another part in this respect. Such as, “He that marrieth doth well; but he that marrieth not doth *better*.” “Marriage is honourable,” &c. “Whosoever findeth a wife, findeth a good thing.” The apostle ought to have made some exceptions here. But I think, if every marriage were gone about prudently and regularly, with the consent of parents and friends, very few marriages would turn out to be unhappy. It is a curious fact, that throughout the whole Scriptures of truth I have never been able to discover a single

hint that children had a right to marry without the consent of their parents. It was a good law ; and, though our dramatists and novelists have set it sore aside by their representations of cruel and unreasonable parents, I find that, in all my experience, and the history of the world from its beginning, that these irregular marriages never have thriven. It was these which caused the destruction of the old world. They proved a grief of mind unto Isaac and Rebecca. They brought the patriarch Judah into great trouble and iniquity. They proved a grievous curse on David ; and rent the kingdom of Israel from his grandson by Solomon's unlawful marriage. But even the simple register of all the evils which have sprung from rash and illegal marriages would fill many volumes.

I shall then set out by stating my own opinion frankly, that if, as in this country, every man have his own wife, and every woman her own husband, that marriage is

the best institution under heaven. I have now tried both ways a long time, and my opinion ought to be of some avail; but I must likewise quote the sentiments of a far greater man, who shall for the present be nameless.

“ You tell me in yours, that man and wife are one flesh. I deny it; for how can they be one flesh, and have different souls? which they have with a vengeance. The love which excited the union is soon converted into disgust. Woman is a composition of so much versatility, that she may shew an agreeable outside to the world, and quite the reverse of the picture to the man of her choice. Agreeable to the primeval curse, her desire is, indeed, to her husband; but it is a desire to torment and vex him. She has the power of speech, but not the gift of understanding. Nature has placed her in a state of subordination, and her whole endeavour through life is to attain absolute power and authority. Her charms give the first sway over

the hearts of her captives, and her empire is afterwards maintained by the most unhallowed means."

How shall I answer this gentleman? I will do so by saying that his impertinence is intolerable; and it appears to me a species of ridicule with which ignorance defames the happiness it can no longer enjoy. If any man feel that he has reason to complain of woman, I request him to look for the causes of his disappointment and affliction in his own conduct; and I am much mistaken if he do not find them there.

Women are formed for attachment. Their gratitude is unimpeachable. Their love is an unceasing fountain of delight to the man who has once attained it, and knows how to deserve it. But that very keenness of sensibility which, if well cultivated, would prove the source of your highest enjoyment, may grow to bitterness and wormwood if you fail to attend to it or abuse it. I know some men who, when



soliciting a favour, and when even denied it, and sore disappointed, will yet bear patiently and quietly with the pride, the haughtiness, and the ill-humour of the person who is able to confer it; and yet the same men will irritate the sensibility and wound the feelings of those tender friends who hold in their hands their happiness for life.

There lies much, indeed, in making choice of a woman worthy of your esteem; but, at all events, endeavour to make her so; and the best way to do it is to make yourself worthy of hers. Your interest and your happiness require that you should appear amiable and respectable in the eyes of your wife; and you will love her, independently of any other consideration, for the love she bears to you. This is the whole mystery of the union; and it is much easier to comprehend than it is to overstrain and keep up the mind to that high stretch of imaginary feelings with which the union at first commences.

If you wish to obtain from this lasting union the satisfaction which it can bestow, you must endeavour, as I said, to conceive your wife worthy of your esteem. If any demon, envious of human felicity, should whisper that she is not so, spurn the idea, and lay not the deleterious unction to your soul.

It is not at all improbable that you may discover defects in her temper and character which love concealed from you before marriage. But remember that it may be your own fault that something substituted in place of that love has not concealed them. Still you may think for a while that it is impossible to shut your eyes against certain weaknesses and imperfections of character, either on the one side or the other ; but it is to the husband I write at present ; and I say, if it is impossible to shut your eyes to imperfections, surely it is not impossible to open them to gratitude, esteem, and attachment ; and proper conduct on your part will secure

these from the woman of your choice. It is too common to see a man of great and shining abilities selecting his friends, both male and female, from those only who pretend to admire his character. This is a weakness in human nature which can never be overcome; and is often of great value in the literary world, where many an author has nothing else to carry him forward save the approbation of a few friends.

But in marriage this is a serious consideration. It is not the girl who pretends to be enraptured with your poem in her album — with your pleading at the bar — or your discourse from the pulpit — whom you ought to choose; for in these instances it is generally all pretence with them; and they just admire you in proportion as you pay attention to themselves.

But it should always be remembered that the union of marriage is one that must continue until one of the parties shall drop into the grave. There are many

instances, I fear, where convenience, to the one party or the other, is the sole inducement; but, in most cases, it is begun with mutual feelings of esteem and affection. The declaimers on this topic—that is, the disappointed—never fail to cry out that innocence and beauty are prostituted for gain, if there is much inequality of years or circumstances. Even deformity, they say, will not stand long in the market, if it has the appendage of an estate; and that wealth, though in the possession of old age, and acquired by doubtful circumstances, has the command of beauty, youth, innocence, and virtue. This I always regard as a distorted representation of the loveliest forms of our nature, suggested by disappointment and malice, without any truth or probability to support it.

I can easily understand that a woman may be deceived by the ease and splendour which wealth and independence give to the exterior of her admirers; but it is

impossible for me to believe that the frankness and generosity of that charming sex will ever permit them to sacrifice their feelings to their convenience. And I have often remarked, that such marriages as were deemed a little selfish by the world were the most regularly happy of any.

Women may be deceived by appearances, or by the importunities of their aged relations; but they will never enter into the holy state of marriage when their affections are not engaged. All conjugal felicity is built on this foundation; and if it is not your own fault, you may rear a superstructure upon it which will last the whole of your life. Although there should not be that ardent and enthusiastic love which poets so fervently describe previous to marriage, or for a short time after the union has taken place, yet you may be assured, a man would not risk his happiness without esteem, nor a woman without affection. There must be something

either in the character or good qualities which has brought the parties together. In the country parts of Scotland such a thing as an unhappy marriage is not known.

This induces me to believe that the greater number of marriages are infinitely happier than those who never tried the state will allow. Can we conceive any condition in which there is a fairer chance of happiness? in which friendship is so firmly cemented? in which hope is so sweetly excited? and in which so many tender relations rise up around you to fill and to expand the human heart?

“Yes, Mr. Shepherd,” says the cynical unmarried man, “you, indeed, shew us the remote objects of a landscape—so remote that no person has ever discovered them before; but bring us nearer home, if you please, to the houses and firesides of this happy junction of hearts, and what do you find there?” In the little acquaintance I have had with the world, I

have calculated that where there was one really unhappy junction, legally and decently made, there were at least a hundred happy ones; so that the lottery of marriage can never be a dangerous one when there are so many prizes for one blank.

The education, the character, the temper, and the original design of woman contradict every part of the supposition that the generality of the sex are troublesome and pestiferous in their disposition. I maintain that the virgin love of woman is the dearest and sweetest gift that Heaven can confer on man; and his is the blame who possesses it, if the garland do not remain green and blossom for ever.

We are bound to admire the incessant care of parents to instruct their daughters, from their infancy, in all useful and substantial acquirements. The experience of the mothers, especially, teaches them to distinguish between petty forms, which captivate and allure the trifling



part of our sex, and the dignified manners which charm the wise. What pains have I seen bestowed on the infant mind to convince the dear child — the mother, perhaps, of the future hero, the poet, or the divine — that the charms of person and of dress were never once to be compared with the improvement of the mind ! And it is, moreover, a common and good rule, in the education of all female children, to make them clean and neat in their person, and easy and agreeable in their manners, without making them vain.

If we look into the female mind, we shall find virtues of a brighter hue, though not of the same colours, of which we boast. We have greater depth of investigation ; they, greater acuteness of perception. Our strength of mind is compensated by their liveliness. If we have more courage to brave danger, they have far more fortitude to meet distress. Our eloquence has more force ; theirs has more



persuasion. Their virtues are feminine, but as substantial and as useful as ours. The Author of our nature, in his infinite wisdom, has fitted the several virtues to the station which he has intended the possessors of them to occupy; and they are so well fitted to it, that you never hear women rail against the married state as unmarried men frequently do. Gentleness and forbearance are so sweetly tempered and mingled in their constitutions, that they bear the hardships of their lot, however peculiarly severe it may be, without repining or levelling a satire against such as are, by the generality of their sex, regarded as more fortunate.

That we do not, in every instance, find this intimate union productive of the greatest happiness, is either because we form engagements for life with too little consideration, or are careful to conceal the defects of our temper before marriage, and allow them to break out after; else we may suppose that there is some speck

of infirmity, some pollution in the spring of all human enjoyment.

But we must take human life as it is, and not as the imagination may paint it. The scenes of delight which we figure to ourselves are nothing more than waking dreams. They are the sweet, but not quite the harmless, illusions of fancy, which, the more they are indulged in, will lay up a greater store of irksome feelings and disappointed hopes for the future part of our lives. In compensation for the loss of this happiness, which in youth we are so ready to paint on a cloud, my experience bids me assure you that the ingredients of human comforts, rising out of the different scenes of life, are totally distinct from the pictures of the imagination; yet a wise and discreet man may find them every where.

Good temper and gentleness I consider as the main avenues leading to mutual enjoyment. They meliorate the violence of contention, keep alive the seeds of har-

mony, and renew endearment. Banish gentleness from your hearth, and what sort of society will remain?—the solitude of the desert were preferable to it. Is it not strange, that two people, having the same common interest, should ever concur in defeating it? They must abide by, and suffer with, one another; and since nature has already provided a sufficient quantity of unavoidable evils for the state of man from without, why should he endeavour to increase them by strife within? The sense of duty and common happiness is surely of itself sufficient to recommend this virtue. It prepossesses and wins every heart, and persuades when every other argument fails. To gentle behaviour, the world is generally disposed to ascribe every other good quality. There are other good qualities which reach us not; but of the influence of gentleness, not only the partner of our bosom, but all around us partake, and therefore all love it. Its influence on our internal enjoy-

ment is, moreover, certain and powerful. That inward tranquillity which it promotes is the first requisite to every pleasurable feeling. It is the calm and clear atmosphere, the serenity and sunshine of the mind ; and when benignity and gentleness reign within, we are always in least danger of being ruffled from without.

Gentleness, sweet gentleness ! it will always prove itself the most blessed guest that attends your hearth, and the balm of connubial love. With it your days will flow in a placid tenour, and you will regard every failing in others with an indulgent eye. You can retreat into the calmness of your spirit as into an undisturbed sanctuary, and enjoy, as it were, a prelude to heavenly bliss ; whereas, if no attention be paid to the government of the temper, a meetness for heaven can never be acquired, and the regenerating power of religion on the soul never known. If we have none of that forbearance toward those who are nearest and dearest to us, which we all so

earnestly entreat from Heaven, can we look for clemency or gentleness from the Judge before whose tribunal we and our wronged friends must meet ?

Being a layman, I do not wish to enter deeply into the mysteries of religion ; but I would always keep it in view. Now, a holy calmness of temper will most of all be promoted by frequent views of those great objects which the religion of the meek and lowly Jesus presents. We shall learn to look upon this world as a state of passage, and inhale the prospects of a blessed immortality—as only acting now, under the eye of God, an introductory part to a more important scene ; and, elevated by such sentiments, our minds will become calm and sedate ; the spirit of true religion will remove us to a distance from the grating objects of worldly contention, and teach us to bear with one another, and love one another ; for the love that cometh from above is gentle and easy to be entreated ;—and, in one word, the

tenour of manners which the gospel enjoins when it commands us to bear one another's burdens; to rejoice with those who do rejoice, and weep with them that weep; to please every one his neighbour for his own good; to be kind and tender-hearted, pitiful and courteous; to support the weak, and to be patient towards all men;—the fruits of this spirit are meekness, gentleness, and long-suffering.

All the virtues of domestic life are lessons which are taught in the Christian school. It is like the sun, who, though he regulates and leads on the year, dispensing light and life to all the planetary worlds, yet disdains not to cherish and beautify the flower which opens its bosom to his beam; so the Christian religion, though chiefly intended to teach us the knowledge of salvation, and be our guide to happiness on high, yet also regulates our conversation in the world, extends its benign influence to every circle of



society, and peculiarly diffuseth its blessed fruits in the paths of domestic life.

The exaltation of the fair sex in the eyes of ours being my sole motive in this essay, I cannot close it better than by an extract from Irving—the most delicately and affectingly beautiful of any thing that ever was written on the female character. “Man is the creature of interest and ambition. His nature leads him forth into the struggle and bustle of the world. Love is but the embellishment of his early life, or a song piped in the intervals of the acts. He seeks for fame, for fortune, for space in the world’s thought, and dominion over his fellow-men. But a woman’s whole life is a history of the affections. The heart is her world; it is there her ambition strives for empire; it is there her avarice seeks for hidden treasures; she sends forth her sympathies on adventure; she embarks her whole soul in the traf-

fic of affection, and if shipwrecked, her case is hopeless, for it is a bankruptcy of the heart.

To a man the disappointment of love may occasion some bitter pangs: it wounds some feelings of tenderness, it blasts some prospects of felicity; but he is an active being; he may dissipate his thoughts in the whirl of varied occupation, or may plunge into the tide of pleasure; or if the scene of disappointment be too full of painful associations, he can shift his abode at will, and, taking as it were the wings of the morning, can fly to the uttermost parts of the earth.

But women's is comparatively a fixed, a secluded, and a meditative life; she is more the companion of her own thoughts and feelings; and if they are turned to ministers of sorrow, where shall she look for consolation? Her lot is to be wooed and won; and if unhappy in her love, her heart is like some fortress that has been



captured, sacked, abandoned, and left desolate.

How many eyes grow dim, how many soft cheeks grow pale, how many lovely forms fade away into the tomb, and none can tell the cause that blighted their loveliness! As the dove will clasp its wings to its side, and cover and conceal the arrow that is preying on its vitals, so is it the nature of women to hide from the world the pangs of wounded affection. The love of a delicate female is always shy and silent. Even when fortunate, she scarcely breathes it to herself; but when otherwise, she buries it in the recesses of her bosom, and there lets it cower and brood among the ruins of her peace. With her the desire of the heart has failed—the great charm of existence is at an end! She neglects all the cheerful exercises which gladden the spirits, quicken the pulses, and send the tide of life in healthful currents through the

veins. Her rest is broken, the sweet refreshment of sleep is poisoned by melancholy dreams, dry sorrow drinks her blood, until her enfeebled frame sinks under the slightest external injury. Look for her after a little while, and you find friendship weeping over her untimely grave, and wondering that one who but lately glowed with all the radiance of health and beauty, should so speedily be brought down to darkness and the worm. You will be told of some wintry chill, some casual indisposition, that laid her low; but no one knows of the mental malady that previously sapped her strength, and made her so easy a prey to the spoiler.

She is like some tender tree, the pride and beauty of the grove—graceful in its form, bright in its foliage, but with the worm preying at its heart. We find it withered when it should be most fresh and luxuriant; we see it drooping its branches to the earth, and shedding leaf

by leaf, until, wasted and perished away, it falls even in the stillness of the forest; and as we muse over the beautiful ruin, we strive in vain to recollect the blast or thunderbolt that could have smitten it with decay. This world has many pleasures between the cradle and the grave, yet, alas! how many of them are futile and vain! but the sweetest of them all, and one that will never decay, is to cherish the heart that loves you.

## SERMON X.

## REVIEWERS.

“ O that mine enemy had written a book !”

It was discovered by Dean Swift, and afterwards proven and fully illustrated by Sir Walter Scott, that the patriarch Job was a Reviewer; and it would appear that he had been as malicious and inveterate as any of his successors, when he could think of no better opportunity for exercising his revenge than that his enemy had written a book. What works this ancient and notable Arabian got to review, will always remain a mystery; but we must not suppose that the art of printing was not then discovered, for Job says in one verse, “ O that my words were written ! O that they were PRINTED in a book !” And as that grand

sacred and dramatic poem was translated from the Arabic by Moses while he was herding the flocks of his father-in-law in that country, it would appear, from the superb style of the work, that the literature of Arabia had at that time reached a very high pitch. But in addressing myself to reviewers and readers I must come nearer home ; and shall endeavour to lay down some general rules for the art, which ought, in every case, to be attended to, and which never have been attended to as yet.

It is true the occupation of the legitimate reviewer is gone, and has devolved entirely on the editors of newspapers ; while the old-established reviews are merely a set of essays, such as these Sermons of mine are.

It is no wonder it should be so, considering the woful want of candour, and miserable political party-spirit, which have pervaded the whole of their lucubrations, from the highest to the lowest ; and he

who was long accounted the highest, was, in this respect, the worst of them all.

You, then, who handle the rod of literary correction, attend to one who has both been a reviewer and reviewed. Read and judge for yourself; and if told that such and such works are exquisitely fine, and that every one admires them, and that they are composed according to the very best of rules, then suspect a party-spirit, and say not to yourself, of your opponent in politics, "Now has mine enemy written a book." This is so decidedly the case in the present day, that no criticism whatever is the least to be depended on. Why not, like a man of honour and candour, judge of the work solely by the effect it produces on yourself? and then you will rarely be wrong. If the author carries you into the regions of fancy, and amuses you with a creation of new and beautiful images, why not approve of them, though of a different political creed? If he goes along the

beaten road of nature, and introduces you to characters having manners and attitudes such as you meet with in the world, why not converse with him as you do with a friend? You ought to give yourself no trouble, whither he goes, or what he does, provided he takes you along with him, and makes an agreeable companion on the road. Never say in your heart, "He is mine enemy who thus delighteth me;" nor ever stoop to be told by another what you are to be pleased with. Your taste and imagination are exclusively your own, and therefore you should be ashamed either to laugh or cry, to abuse or to commend, at the fiat of any save your own taste and judgment.

The exercise of your taste, then, should uniformly be directed to the free and voluntary application of the understanding to the mental food presented to it. Most men will relish what is natural and simple, if they are permitted to judge for themselves. If you take the most admired

passages from the best authors, you will find them to be the natural expressions of men of good sense ; and you will admire them, because you feel that they are precisely what you would have thought and said yourself on the same occasion ; that they are, in fact, the things which have always been thought, but never so well expressed. One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh ; but the earth abideth ever, and all races of men admire the same objects. A tree in the full expansion of its branches is beautiful, and a cataract is sublime. The savage as well as the philosopher feels and is delighted with these beauties of nature. Therefore a correct taste, whereby you can judge of the works of others, is nothing more than a common and unprejudiced understanding. Never allow any person to persuade you that criticism is a science, and that an author must go astray unless he follows certain rules. You may just as soon believe that you



can acquire the power of distinguishing between bitter and sweet by laying down rules for your palate, as between the low and the sublime by studying the art of poetry.

No rules ever devised by man can make a poet. The fire and rapidity of true genius will always overstep the cold restraints of art; and why should the productions of genius be tied down by the chains and fetters of criticism? The rule ought to be in every man's breast; and if he does not find it there, I would advise him to consider, that perhaps nature intended him for some more useful profession than that of stringing rhymes, or passing sentence on other men's works.

It is the prerogative of genius to take a high and commanding station over the human mind. Were I to give an explanation of the term, I should call it a power which enables him who possesses it to hold the greatest number of his fellow-creatures in willing captivity. Its voice and language

address men of different countries and of different ages with the same effect. Ignorance arises to salute it, and learning bends to its sway. If it had not been for the ingenious contrivance of men of profound understandings and cold hearts to fix it down with rules of their own invention, its power would have been irresistible, and its dominion extended over the whole world. But perhaps it may be said, that these rules of the schoolmen of taste are useful for giving us a full relish of the beauties of fine compositions, and that by teaching us why and to what extent we should admire, they may improve the reader, though they are of no benefit to the author ; and, if this is admitted, then the said declaimers will tell you, that though it is impossible to form genius by the compasses, the square, and the rule, yet there are many excrescences in a vivid imagination which the cold hand of criticism may help to rub away. In this manner those immaculate judges of mat-

ters which should be left to the feelings of mankind, carry on their usurpations over the powers of the understanding.

Genius may be defined as taste put in motion and displayed; and I firmly believe, when a man is animated by the fire of nature, and his mind brought to its full tone of exertion, that he will write more consistently with the rules of common sense, than if fettered by the best rules that ever reviewer laid down. Besides, the same man whose thoughts were like lightning while composing his works, may be cool in revising them. It is not necessary to have one head to invent and another to censure and correct; for, certainly, the imagination which sketches the outlines is best qualified to finish the picture. If a man would do justice to himself, he must hold reviews and reviewers in the utmost contempt. The original powers of his mind will never be developed, if he cower like a spaniel beneath the lash of the canting critic. His

own taste must be the rule of his composition, else he may be assured he will be inferior to himself.

There is another advantage which your most sapient arbiters pretend to be of great advantage to the reading public; which is, the pointing out to us what ought to be admired, and how and in what manner we ought to feel the beauties of fine composition, which you seem quite convinced we could not do without your particular instructions. We are especially obliged to you for this; for, without doubt, the design is a charitable one. But if your discrimination is so nice, who pretend to hold the balance of taste in your hands, then, in the first place, you must persuade all men of genius to write directly according to your rules, in order to make this great object of criticism useful and necessary. They must write first to please you, and then you will take care to make their works acceptable and useful to the rest of mankind. The

authors are to be the physicians, and you the apothecaries to mix up the dose so as to produce its proper effect.

You may depend on it, almost as much as any article of your faith, that we can never be brought to feel what is beautiful and sublime by the whole art of criticism. Independently of all reasoning, there must be something without us to rouse and carry along, with an irresistible force, some latent principle in our mind. Every man, therefore, should be his own critic, and strive rather to judge for himself than to impose his dogmas on others. I wish particularly to inculcate the advantage of this on a young man beginning to relish and admire the beauties of fine composition,—that he disregard all the absurd rules of reviewers; for he will never obtain a standard for his taste by any precept which another man is pleased to give him; and therefore he will exceedingly increase his labour, if he strive to admire such beauties as are pointed out

to him, which he himself did not spontaneously perceive. There are, now-a-days, so many coxcombs of reviewers, that it is most diverting to read their luminous observations. If the author be but of their party in politics, and adhere a little to their dogmatic rules, there is nothing more required; they will point out to you, in perfect raptures, the finest and the most brilliant passages. But if he be of the adverse party, then "their enemy has written a book," and on him they fall tooth and nail. Of all canting in the world, there is none like the canting of criticism. The reviewer looks only at the stop-watch! "Prithee, shepherd, who keeps all these jackasses?" said my uncle Toby.

If we try one of these self-constituted judges with the true touchstone whereby to appreciate genius, we find him generally deficient in taste as well as candour, and that he does not understand the passages he has condemned. It would do



our young men of a literary turn of mind much good, if Nature herself were permitted to give the law; and if our reviewers would endeavour rather to write something to be admired, than try to force us to admire what has already been written for some mean or selfish purpose, to serve the interests of a publisher or party. But the plague is, they cannot write any thing to be admired; the greater part of them being a sort of authors discarded by the public as well as the publishers. There are and have been a few splendid exceptions; but taking all the reviewers within the last half century, since reviewing came in fashion, you will find how very few of them were capable of writing a popular original work.

Is it not curious, that it is always in the ruder times of a nation that those works are composed from which critics afterwards derive all their grand rules. There is one period for invention, for the bold creations of an unbridled fancy, and

another for the sober decisions of a cool and improved understanding ; but the lash of criticism is any thing but favourable to genius. It is an adder in the path, and has marred the mental journey of many an ardent and promising genius, and brought many of them to an untimely grave. If there were such a thing as an impartial critic in the world, which I rather doubt, a bold unprejudiced fellow who would tell his mind freely, fearless of all parties, whether public or private, I would regard him as a treasure to the realm ; but the writings of such a man I have never contemplated.

I would, therefore, advise all young men of imagination never to read a work of criticism, ancient or modern ; but step back to an early age ; and if the original stamina of genius is yours, the fame you covet is secure. Take the simplicity of Moses, the splendour of Job, David, and Isaiah. Take Homer, and, if you like, Hesiod, Pindar, and Ossian ; and by all



means William Shakespeare. In short, borrow the fire and vigour of an early period of society, when a nation is verging from barbarism into civilisation; and then you will imbibe the force of genius from its original source. Nourish the inspiration, and despise the cold rules of criticism. Even my own school, the traditional ballads of my country, is better than theirs.

Let nothing, then, persuade any youthful reader, in judging of a composition, to depart from the standard which he has in his own mind. Because you must be certain that there is some defect in the author if his works can please another man before they can please you, or there must be an incurable defect in your taste if every beauty must be pointed out to you before you can perceive or relish it. Despise the idea. Read none of them; but think and judge for yourself. If you had seen the times which I have seen in the Modern Athens, you could not have

believed that a certain little great man could have so soon sunk into such utter insignificance.

It is absurd, however, to imagine that our mental relish for the beauties of composition cannot be improved. I am far from advancing an opinion which might encourage either presumption or idleness. But there is a great difference between a bodily frame rendered healthy by exercise, and one whose health depends upon medicine. . Therefore, application to good books is of infinitely more use to a young man than to study the comments which have been made on them. There is, also, a refinement in taste, which you will perhaps be fortunate enough to avoid if you never read a work on criticism. This consists in the affectation of feeling beauties which you do not in reality feel, but are merely pinning your faith to another man's sleeve ; and a young man is in great danger of falling into the snare, because he thinks his understanding will

be called in question, if his admiration does not keep pace with that of the critics. It is only quotations from the latter that are spouted at *soirées*, the main work is never looked into: I have often observed this, and perceived that it was a great evil under the sun.

Prejudice may not always suffer a man to acknowledge it, as it may be his enemy that wrote the book; but I hold it impossible that the exquisite touches of a man of true genius shall fail to excite warmth and admiration in the youthful mind. I adjure you all, then, my young friends, that when you find the inspiration and power of the author carrying you along with him, take a polite leave of the reviewers in as easy a manner as you can. You have learned the mystery of the art, so far as it respects yourself, to much greater advantage than ever you will learn it from them. I believe, too, that every attempt to judge correctly will improve your taste, in the same secret man-

ner in which frequent repetition improves the memory. The only difficulty is, to decide what books you should read ; but in this listen to the general voice of mankind, but never to a critic by profession.

I dislike all fine and splendid writing in prose, and admire plain common sense much more ; therefore I advise you to give up the study of it, and cultivate that philosophy of the mind which investigates the hidden springs and sources of pleasure in reading ; there you will find from the productions of genius pleasures of a purer kind, and at a cheaper rate, than by skimming over the lucubrations of hundreds of reviewers every year. Sit down to your book as you would to conversation ; and never harbour an intention of triumph over the defects of your author ; but divest yourself of all envy, and read to be pleased, and it is more than probable you will be so. According to the excellency of his work, you will be the more or less pleased ; but if he

should fail in those particular points which are suited to your fancy, it is an easy matter to take leave of him. But do not get angry and abuse him; you need not act improperly because he writes ill, as you may be sure he did as well as he could. But if you feel pleased with him, that is your own affair; only do not suffer any person, whether friend or reviewer, to tickle you into more delight than you naturally feel. You will enjoy far greater pleasure in discovering the beauties which affect your mind, without being obliged to a prompter. This I consider as the clear gain of taste, which will please you the more as being the fruit of your own industry; and you will likewise discover whether your taste be equal to the genius of your author, and at any rate you will be in the way of making it so.

There is, in fact, a great want of ingenuousness in applying rules which are not your own to the works of others. It

is like the honesty of the tailor, who stole a silver foot-rule solely for the purpose of doing justice to his customers. I do not mean merely that you deceive your companions into a better opinion of your taste than it deserves; but candour and fairness in the inner man is honourable and becoming in all men, but especially in the young. Your expressions should not only be the exact copy of your mind, but your very thoughts should be your own, arising naturally from the circumstances that suggest them. Never praise or censure because another person does so, nor pretend to feel because a reviewer or any other pretended to feel before you. There is an amiable candour which sparkles on every benevolent countenance, and there is also a candour which reaches to every thought of the heart; and the one of these is connected with the other. You may think that I am refining too much here, and confounding together the laws of taste with the laws of morality; but really



nothing is farther from my meaning. We are so much the beings of habit, that honest ingenuousness in one case secures it in another. Whenever you perceive vanity and affectation in a man, you may view it as a clear proof that the man not only wants understanding, but that his principles are suspicious. Bring, therefore, always an unprejudiced mind to the works of genius, and you will read them with pleasure and improvement. The only rule I have laid down to you all along, and which I again repeat, is, to call no man your master in taste and judgment; and I think you will be able to follow this advice if you find a reviewer pretending to direct your taste, and to discover beauties which were not apparent to you. If the true paintings of nature and character in former ages are not sufficient to form your taste, no law of criticism will ever avail you.

My intention in all this is to persuade you that you have a mental standard,

the gift of God, by which you will be able to appreciate the works of genius, and that you will improve that gift by exercise. I deprecate, above all things, an implicit dependence on the opinions of others ; but to make some amends for this, I request you to exercise your own judgment as much as possible. The first impressions made on the mind may not always be just ; for youthful fancy is too apt to consider the ornament an essential part of the dress, and the gilding often conceals the counterfeit from their eyes, veiling the lack of nerve and sinew. But you may be assured, if you have an original capacity of being pleased with excellence, you will not only soon be able to detect false pretenders to it, but you will soon relish the simple guise of Nature through the modest drapery with which men of true genius always adorn her. Let your judgment alone direct your taste. Be true to yourself, and you will never mistake the painting of a cour-



tesan for the blush of nature and virtue. That this slow and correct exercise of judgment is the right one, may, I think, be proved from the new and additional pleasure we receive from a work of genuine merit every time we peruse it. Perhaps, also, this repeated testimony of an individual, though you are partial to the witness, will lead you as certainly to the best authors as the united testimony of all the reviewers in the world.

Save by translations, I am altogether unacquainted with the exquisite beauties which are to be found in the writings of the ancients; but I have always this consolation, that the translations are better than I could have made them, though I had pored over them one half of my life; so that I think I have some advantages over schoolmen, for I have often corrected the English of some of the best Greek and Latin scholars in Scotland. But in all that regards ancient literature, I am not entitled to say a word. Only be sure always to

feel your way; and be sure that you understand your author before you exercise the power of judging. I have been told, indeed, that there is genius in sound, and that a certain combination of words in a foreign language may be so formed as to make the person who hears them giddy or sick, though he do not understand a word of them. This appears to me problematical; and having never seen the experiment made, I can only admire at a distance this vast power of genius over the mind, which converts an artificial combination into a natural sound, intelligible both to man and beasts. This gift, however, must be rare; and I know not where to look for it. I have heard the best parts of Homer read in Greek, and sometimes fancied that I could trace from the tones what he was writing about; but it was all a delusion when it came to be explained. I have heard the lays of Ossian chanted for whole nights and days running, in their

original tongue ; but then the people could explain nothing, and there my fancy got leave to revel free. I have read, indeed, of navigators who conversed with savages, where both parties made themselves perfectly understood by the other, trafficking together to the utmost minutiae of price. But the truth is, that if you be not familiar with the language of an author, you are compelled to obtain it by a slow and tedious operation, which I think must often leave disagreeable recollections associated with the finest passages of antiquity.

But, lest I should get beyond my depth on this subject, I shall only add, by way of recapitulation, that there is a pure and unadulterated taste in man which is gratified by the language of nature, and the gratifying of which is similar to our admiration of the beautiful and noble works which are presented to us in the universe. This is the taste with which our mind and judgment are alone connected. It is

that relish for nature which genius has the power of painting. But let me remind you of a prostitution of genius, which gives you a representation of nature in the robes of vice, and which tries to please you by an appeal to the passions instead of the judgment. It requires no great talents to adapt this luscious kind of writing to the taste of mankind; but it is always more dangerous in proportion to the genius of the author. Vice steals on the heart when it approaches you under the sanction of wit and talents. The poison is then disguised, and may delight you so much that you may be at a loss to know whether you derive the pleasure from the talents of the author, or from the nature of his descriptions. But let your taste be without ambiguity; relishing what is pure, but avoiding, as you would do a serpent, whatever has a tendency to corrupt your heart; and you may safely regard criticism as a thankless and unprofitable con-

cern, as a great evil under the sun, and the one that has most of all others retarded the development of true and natural genius.

## SERMON XI.

## DEISTICAL REFORMERS.

“ The fool hath said in his heart there is no God.”

ONE would think there is not so great a fool on earth as to say so in his heart ; for my part, I do not believe there is an atheist in the world ; else he must be deaf, blind, and insensate. Yet it is worthy of remark, that the term deist is not of older date than the middle of the sixteenth century ; the class of unbelievers who now assume this appellation were till then denominated atheists ; and it was to avoid the odium of that name that they arrogated to themselves the less forbidding and alarming title by which they are now distinguished. Now, as I look upon unbelief as the leading sin

of the age, I regard it my duty to contribute my mite towards the preservation of the sublime truths of Christianity, fully convinced of the pernicious effects of infidelity on the virtue and happiness of mankind, and the guilt and danger in which it involves all who embrace it for a rejection of Christianity, as it certainly leads to speculative and practical atheism, as the sparks fly upward.

What is that thing called natural religion which the deist clings to? for I declare I do not comprehend it. Has it a local habitation and a name in any nation under heaven, or is it merely a theory for speculating upon? Does it promise its adherents either peace, safety, or future happiness? Christianity has a footing in the world, and is still gaining ground, but where is this cherished religion of the deist to be found? If it were the religion of nature, how comes it that the God of nature has extinguished it from the face of the earth, save from

the mouths of captious cavillers? It is only to be found in the alleged capacity of certain men to discover it, or in the mouths and writings of those who are obliged to borrow its doctrines from holy writ.

The history of mankind is like the history of an individual. There is one period in which the mind is open to impressions, and credulous even to folly; and there is another in which philosophy attempts to combat truth. Our country is, I think, fast approaching to this last stage of existence. Our very priests, who, in the opinion of the modern class of infidels have so long triumphed over the human understanding, now admit that it was the failing of mankind, a few centuries ago, to believe in every absurdity which their predecessors in their ignorance imposed on them. The error of this age is to believe too little, save in some things more extravagantly ridiculous than was ever promulgated in any



former age. But if we go on improving at the present rate, I should not be surprised to see a set of philosophers endeavouring to persuade the world to believe in nothing, not even in Rowism itself.

Wisdom, I apprehend, consists in knowing both what to receive and what to reject; and I have made up my mind that no ridicule which a deist can throw on the religion of Jesus shall ever eradicate from my belief one item of the truth of that Divine institution; and if my simple and humble efforts can establish but one wavering soul in the same resolution, I shall consider my time well bestowed. I deem it more contemptible to be a deist than the slave of superstition. Ridicule is the instrument of their persecution; and as they stop at no manner of blasphemy, I have often found it difficult to contain my countenance, and refrain from tears, at hearing the profligacy of the sentiments of learned men. But as the terror of death should never make me a

bigot, neither can all the arguments of philosophy or force of ridicule I have ever heard convert me to deism.

Because, let us consider what deism leaves us for what it deprives us of. Christianity has a tendency to make us morally good; it provides us with a simple and complete rule of duty, which no scheme of philosophy has ever been able to accomplish; it has furnished us with motives to the cultivation of holiness the most suitable and persuasive that can possibly be conceived; it addresses itself to all the powers and susceptibilities of our nature; it operates through the decisions of the understanding and through the affections of the heart; it speaks to our love, to our hope and our fear, to our gratitude and our interest; and in the arguments by which it works upon us there is a grandeur, an authority, and a pathos, which I should think no contemplative mind could resist. It tells us we are placed

under the government of that Great Being who created and sustains the universe; it unfolds to our view a scene of future retribution the most awful and impressive which imagination can paint, whose throne is to be occupied by Jehovah, whose transactions are to embrace the character and fate of every individual of our race, and whose awards are those of immutable rectitude, and stretch into the boundless duration of eternity; and through life it represents us as constantly under the eye of our Maker, which never leaves us for a moment on the path of life. It tells us that He is present with us at all times and in all places, directing us in every step, fortifying us against every temptation, administering to our aid when we trust in him and require it, putting a proper check on every evil propensity, and presenting a suitable stimulus to every generous, kind, and amiable affection. In short, that our Saviour shall be our God and our guide

unto death, and through death and after death our exceeding rich rewarder.

What does poor, cold, forlorn infidelity leave us for all this? No more than to wring our bosoms with the most poignant distress and despair, at the very moment when we stand most in need of consolation. It tells us that when we consign our nearest and dearest friends to the mercy of a Redeemer, that we indulge in a foolish delusion; that they have no tie, no hold of a Mediator; that all the prayers we put up for them are vain, and vain every hope that we cherish for them. "I would rather be a dog and bay the moon," than brow the heaven, and to God's own face deny the revelation of his will to man.

Away with such cold-hearted and gloomy speculations! They shed a misery over the human heart which no sophistry can dissipate. In the day of distress their comforts can sound like nothing but mockery and scorn. They

bid us renounce our Saviour, and banish that Comforter who cherished and upheld us; and then where can we go, or where turn ourselves, or where else seek for the words of eternal life?

But let us reason the matter without enthusiasm or violence. Is it not more wise and honourable, then, to refrain from adopting opinions of any apparent danger, till we have considered them in all their bearings and consequences? On the one hand I dare not enter deeply into the mysteries of revelation, nor into the ingenious speculations of the freethinkers on the other. But one of the great objections of the latter to the doctrines of Christianity and the Trinity is, its being so involved in mystery as to be incomprehensible; therefore, they take it upon them to laugh at it and hold it up to ridicule. But, O fools that they are and slow of heart! do they not plainly see that wherever there is a display of the power or wisdom of God, either in revelation or

the kingdom of nature, there also they will find a mystery beyond the capacity of human reason to unfold? On this incomprehensible ground, then, I shall never encounter the advocates of unbelief in the doctrines of the Gospel, because they could never know when I was right, and I should always be sure that they were wrong. There is no kind of wit so easy as that which tends to ridicule what neither you nor your adversary can possibly understand. I think it is therefore best, in supporting the doctrines of the Christian religion, always to avoid any attempt to explain mysteries. The necessity and belief of a mystery is one thing, but the explanation another.

Let us never, therefore, even when we ponder on questions in which our eternal interests may be connected, try to involve them in the darkness of philosophical investigation, because a speculative mind may take the wrong side on the clearest subject ; and supposing a revelation from



God to be necessary, what kind of revelation would it be if it were composed with the intention of solving all the doubts of scepticism ?

There is one thing in which we have greatly the advantage over the deist : our professions are all the same in every material point relating to the doctrine of grace and salvation. Every one of them whom I have either heard preach or reason, differs from another, and generally from all the rest. Let us take all the arguments of those who are endeavouring to mislead our minds, and we shall find that there are not two of the whole number who agree in the material points which they wish to establish, while they entirely agree as to those truths of religion which they wish to destroy. They have arrived at a degree of knowledge and illumination at which they are able to perceive all the pretended absurdities of Christianity ; but they have not yet reached that sublimity of exaltation which

enables them to give something equally useful and interesting as a substitute. Keep always this in view when you begin to study the quibbles of the men who would mislead your minds from the sacred and sublime truths of Christianity, and ask your hearts what do they leave you in its place.

You will then perceive, that in every thing relating either to religion or morality, that that man is not an apostle who pretends merely to pull down ; it is also necessary that he be able to build up. If he only does the one without the other, he shews you that he has the power of darkening truth, of suggesting doubts, and disturbing the peace of your mind, without satisfying the longing soul as to any better mode of attaining present or future felicity. His mind is ingenious to mislead, but not candid to impart the knowledge you desire. A man of ordinary ingenuity is able to involve the plainest dictates of reason in



obscurity and darkness; and much more may he gain an imaginary triumph over many of the truths of revelation, which from their very nature we are incapable of explaining. But I stand by this, and it is an argument I shall repeat to the end, that it is no objection to a truth revealed as essentially necessary to our comfort, that it is above our comprehension. This is one of the deist's great bulwarks; but my view of it is, that it is nothing more than employing the reason which God has bestowed upon us to defeat the benevolent purposes of his gift.

I would ask the sceptic if he does not observe any traces of wisdom or intelligence in the works of nature? if there is no specific revelation of the unity and power of the Godhead in the Scriptures? or, in short, if there is any thing in the world which he receives as a truth which he cannot comprehend? If he answers in the affirmative, as he must, then where is his great bulwark? His objection is

levelled not against the truths of revelation alone, but against the possibility of conveying truths of any kind to the mind of man ; and whoever persists in it, it will infallibly lead to gross ignorance or obstinate atheism. We enjoy the blessings of sense in this sublunary state without the assistance of philosophy, and when we reason on the sources of pleasure and the causes of our enjoyment, we bewilder ourselves in uncertain conjectures, yet we still continue to enjoy. I wish to God that we were able in the same manner to taste the sweets of Divine truth, while we are vainly endeavouring to comprehend it : but in this glorious mental feast to doubt is to destroy the relish.

The truths of revelation were never intended to satisfy the doubts of philosophical infidelity. Those parts of them which give us information concerning the purity and perfections of God can never be subjected to the decisions of man ;

and those which relate to our duty were never intended for the disquisitions of captious philosophers. The first, from their own nature, require us to exercise humility; and the second are so plain, that any man who does not attempt to reason on them must understand them. Suppose, for an instant, that Divine revelation were every thing which the wisest of mankind could make it, would that, do you think, secure it from the carpings of vain philosophy? Is it to be at all supposed that their pride and their desire of distinction who at present oppose those truths would not find something to alter or improve? Believe it not; for there are always such a number of restless, discontented beings in the world, that there is no established or happy system which they will not attack. But believe this, that their objections to the Christian religion which affect your mind are the offspring of weakness or passion, not of reason. I will venture to assert,

that there is no truth, human or Divine; which interested, selfish, and ingenious men, will not try to combat. It is of no consequence how forcibly or clearly the truth is stated, as neither its intrinsic value, the evidence by which it is supported, nor the common sense of mankind, can defend it from attack; and if this assertion be admitted, we need not be surprised that Christianity has in every age been opposed by the whole force of human wisdom. There are no truths in it flattering to the present state of man, nor is it safe to tell the sceptical philosopher that he is a poor, weak-minded, short-sighted mortal—that his wisdom is folly, and his pretensions ridiculous; and that if he finds himself possessed of a fund of reason and a power of mind capable of resisting the plainest dictates of revelation, how is it possible to teach him humility? I beseech you, therefore, before you come to any determination concerning the truths of religion, to con-

sider whether they be adapted to the state of man, or merely to the minds of philosophers. Provided they instruct the ignorant, and are calculated to give peace and comfort to the numerous classes of mankind, to restrain vice and give the assurances of pardon and a future life to the miserable and the guilty and to those who are ready to perish, then why should we abandon them though a few ingenious and cool-minded men should endeavour to persuade us that they are unnecessary? If it is true on the one hand that no system of truth could be adopted to all the peculiarities of their minds, it is equally true on the other that all their reasoning against revelation is founded on conjecture, and, from the very nature of the subject, can never be conclusive.

In the history of mankind it would appear, that there have been all along a certain proportion of them created with dispositions to oppose all established rules

and rights; and this disposition is still gaining ground, threatening to overthrow both churches and states. I am sorry to observe, that among a numerous class of wretched politicians every one of them is tinctured with the principles of infidelity. I should not have said every one of them, for I hope in God there are some exceptions; but I solemnly declare, that as far as I am acquainted with their writings and characters, they are all grovelling in the mire of scepticism, and not only so, but exulting in their high attainment in this, resembling their great archetype. Although it will look very odd in the middle of a sermon, and a serious, well-meant one too, I cannot help inserting here a few lines from a certain Ode to the Devil, once quoted by a brilliant northern maiden, now labouring under a hopeless consumption:—

Hail patriot spirit! thy labours be — ;  
For of all great Reformers thyself wert the first :



Thou wert the first with discernment strong,  
To perceive that all rights divine were wrong;  
And long hast thou spent thy sovereign breath,  
In heaven above and in earth beneath,  
And roused it from thy burning throne,  
The glory of independence alone;  
Proclaiming to all, with fervour and irony,  
That kingly dominion 's all humbug and tyranny,  
And whoso listeth may be free;  
For freedom, full freedom, 's the word with thee;  
That life has its pleasures, the rest is a sham,  
And all that comes after a flim and a flam.

This doctrine of our arch enemy's is the prevailing one among our grand reforming sceptics of the present day; but surely these men never examine both sides of the question, else there are some leading truths which would carry conviction with them. They would see that God is the wise and just governor of the world; that he is merciful, and man unworthy. These truths, if at all considered, are adapted to the level of every man's capacity and conscience; and therefore the only objection to them must be the particular

form which they assume in the Scriptures. Admitting that God is just and merciful, and that man is guilty, yet our reforming philosophers are not satisfied with the peculiar manner of God's exercising that justice and mercy, nor yet with the terms on which future life is offered to them. If the doctrines are supported by the interpositions of the Deity, they deny the facts; and if we employ reasoning, they reject our conclusions. What, then, is to be done with men possessed of this subtile and wonderful power of denying every thing? In my humble opinion, we should just allow them to doubt and cavil on until they give us something in place of Christianity on which they wish us to depend, and then we may acquire the art of doubting in as great perfection as themselves. There is nothing in the compass of nature, or in the possibility of revealed truth, of which either a weak or ingenious man may not bring himself to doubt. Confusion, or acuteness of mind, may



equally lead to the possession of this happy talent. The doctrines of revelation are indefinite with respect to our reason. If we could have discovered them of ourselves they would not have been revealed; and therefore it is better and safer for us to lay hold of what is offered, than to doubt because we cannot comprehend.

It is a singular fact, that those men who pretend to believe in nothing revealed to them, are yet as fond of accounting for some favourite dogmas of their own as if they were in full possession of a reasonable faith. The power of doubting seems only to extend to received opinions; as if the human mind had not yet arrived at that intuitive perfection which makes the rejection of a truth tantamount to the establishment of a system. This fortunately brings our reforming philosophers to the level of other men, and gives us the privilege of examining the articles of their faith, be-

fore we are bewildered by their speculations. It is best for us, then, always in our disputes and conversations with them to bring the matter to this decisive point. The truth may suffer in our hands from their superior acuteness, and we may be unable to penetrate into their motives for misleading us, but in a point so material as the subversion of our faith respecting doctrines on which we have been accustomed to rest our salvation, it will be wise for us, in the first instance, to hear what truths they have agreed to substitute in place of those which they are persuading us to relinquish. This simple method of preserving and defending ourselves I have recommended from the beginning, and do so once more; and you will find that it will puzzle our reforming philosophical friends much more than the finest reasoning.

We come into the field on unequal terms with men who have already lost the best stake of their hopes and happi-

ness. Let us make them bring, therefore, the little which they can promise into competition with the immense sums we are to lose; and if they can afford us no equivalent, why should we listen to them? and if they cannot agree among themselves, it is best to leave them alone till they do so. Some of them pretend, by the force of human reason alone, to give us more exalted views of the nature and perfections of God than those which we receive from the Sacred Oracles. But on the supposition that their claims equal their presumption, we have still to inquire from what sources they derived their information, and in what manner their superior discoveries have influenced their conduct to the God whom they worship. The first of these inquiries leads us back to the times when the revelation of God did not illumine the darkness of nature, or to the places into which its beams have not yet penetrated; and the second, to the men with whom we have to con-

tend—these grand reformers of all existing things.

On looking back to the former ages of the world, we find certain periods in their history in which mankind were as far advanced in civilisation and the arts of life as we are, yet in which they were far behind us in every thing respecting the truths of religion, and the knowledge either of the unity or the perfections of God. It is held as a kind of literary profanation to entertain any doubts of the learning, taste, or wisdom of the ancients. It is true, indeed, that in the greater part of their writings which have been transmitted, they discover a knowledge of human nature, a genuine simplicity and a power of mind, which have not yet been equalled in modern productions. But on all subjects connected with religion or a future state, their opinions are held in little estimation even by the deistical reformers of our religion themselves. But these very men,



who deny the truth of Divine revelation, have acquired notions concerning many of its doctrines which the wisest and best men of antiquity could never discover. They admit them into their creed, while they deny the source whence they derived them. I will not say it is want of candour, but it must either be that or want of attention which leads them into this absurdity; and it behoves us not only to use the light of revelation, as they have done, as the means of purifying our notions, but to let it guide us through the intricacies with which our minds are entangled, and bring us onward to immortal life. Why should we be indebted to the word of God for the sole purpose of enlarging our minds, and not receive from it the important benefits which it may confer? We should laugh at a philosopher who denied the existence of the sun, while it was the occupation of his life to collect his beams into a bottle, or separate them by a prism.

It is useful, also, for us to observe the improvement which those who deny the Scriptures have derived from the discoveries of the Divine Nature, which they pretend to have made by the new and extraordinary exertions of human reason; but let us follow the simple rule of Scripture, and judge of opinions by their fruits. I hope we need no reasoning to convince us that in proportion as we are acquainted with the works and perfections of God, we shall be the more disposed to mingle reverence with our worship, and to cherish humility in our hearts. Independently of Divine revelation, these are dispositions necessarily stamped on the nature and condition of man. Were the most obstinate unbeliever permitted to behold the majesty and splendour of Divine power in a more direct and comprehensive manner than he is able to trace it in its effects, we may rest satisfied that his feelings would correspond with his situation. The professed intention of the

Holy Scriptures is to produce this desirable effect on the minds of those who believe in them. Some may object to the truths revealed, but no reasonable man can ever object to the adoration and humility which they are fitted to excite. They have not only given us very exalted views of God who created and governs the world, but of the imbecility of any of his creatures to contend with him or dispute his power and omnipotence, after looking abroad upon the heavens and the earth. How beautifully sublime are some of the expressions of the sacred volume relating to this!

Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner-stone thereof when the morning-stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

Or who shut up the sea with doors when it brake forth as if it had issued out of the womb? when I made the cloud the garment thereof, and a thick swaddling band for it, and brake up for it my decreed place, and set bars and doors, and said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed?

Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering. He stretcheth forth the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing. He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds; and the cloud is not rent under them. He holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it. He hath compassed the waters with bounds, until the day and night come to an end. The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at his reproof. He divideth the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smiteth through the proud. By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens; his hand hath formed the



crooked serpent. Lo, these are parts of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?

He bowed the heavens, and came down; and darkness was under his feet. And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly; yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness his secret place: his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. At the brightness that was before him his thick clouds passed; hailstones and coals of fire. The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hailstones and coals of fire. Yea, he sent out his arrows and scattered them; he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them. Then the channels of the waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O Lord! at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.

When I consider thy heavens, the work

of thy fingers ; the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained ; what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou visitest him ! O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth !

The heavens declare the glory of God ; and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun ; which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run his race.

I could multiply a hundred more, all tending to prove that those men to whom the promises of eternal life were very dark and uncertain, and the way of salvation through a Redeemer totally un-

known ; for the prophecies of him being the words of inspiration, the men knew not with any distinctness what they were prophesying about ; but all of them perceived the hand of an Almighty Creator and Governor of the universe, by looking abroad on the face of nature, and acknowledged him in these magnificent exulting strains. And, moreover, the characters of the sacred writers, and of all those whom they describe as the servants of God, give many plain and perspicuous proofs of the power and influence of the truths of revelation, especially in their worship.

Is it not, therefore, to be expected that our modern deists, who have made discoveries of the Divine nature far more exalted and sublime, should surpass all other men in the regularity and fervour of their devotions ? We need not expect that they should be enthusiasts, because philosophy has waged eternal war against imagination ; but surely they should give

us the form or the example of a pure and spiritual worship, suitable to the pretended dignity of their own minds, and more calculated to express the feelings and wants of a reasonable nature, than any thing we have been able to derive from the word of God.

Now, really what is the character of the grand reformers of our religion, morals, and government? This is one of the grounds whereon to try those who believe in the Scriptures, and those who do not: and with all the attention which I have been able to give to the subject, I have found the latter greatly deficient in that adoration and gratitude which we all owe to our Creator and Preserver. I have conversed with many of them for the last twenty-six years, listened to all their reasoning without daring to interfere with my rude and vulgar speech; and of late I have looked into their writings, both philosophical and moral, as far as it lay in my power in the wilderness, and I

do not find that their exalted notions of the Godhead have once suggested the necessity of worship at all. I have attended minutely to their whole conduct, and I have no reason to believe that they are guilty of frequent or fervent prayer to God. If ever they are caught in the act, we cannot fail to observe that it is only under severe affliction, when their minds are softened and annealed, or when the prospect of death had fairly overcome the principles of their philosophy.

I speak not here of the delightful employment of giving up the mind and spirit to our heavenly Father, of the soothing consolation of depending on superior strength, or of the rapturous joy of a grateful heart; but I maintain that the worship of God by direct adoration, by reverence, or by devout meditation on his power, goodness, and compassion, is the natural result of our acquaintance with these Divine perfections; and that if our reforming deists do not worship in

sincerity as their Christian brethren do, what can we think but that their pretended knowledge is affectation, love of singularity, and pride of heart, and that they are in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity?

If, on the other hand, the researches of our friends are leading them to absolute scepticism, I think we have as good reason to doubt of their understanding as they have to doubt of our faith. I can perceive no advantage to be gained from a creed which has no fixed principles. It gives the mind no solid ground of confidence for the present, and deprives it of all hope for the future. We should surely rather take our choice of going wrong, than the certainty of having nothing; for if a man doubts of the principles of his religion, of truths which other men believe to be established, of the existence of God, of the immortality of the soul, and of a future state, he may be in equal doubt whether any of his own speculations are well founded, and



therefore his unbelief carries along with it a reason for its condemnation.

To sum up, then : O, my friends, beware how you desert the sunny braes of the gospel of Jesus, for the cold barren wastes of infidelity. What does the latter present to us but a total negation of all which tends most effectually to cheer us under the calamities of our lot in this life, presenting us with a dreary path in which there is neither a shadow from the heat, nor a shelter from the storm, of Divine wrath. And what a vista of eternity ! A shoreless sea without star or beacon, or hope of heaven for evermore. But, clinging to the mild and heavenly doctrines of Christianity, we partake of the blessings of this life with a far purer and higher relish, when we regard them as bestowed by the hand of an all-perfect God, and when we receive them through the channel of a mercy secured to us by the mediation of his own Son, and when we contemplate them as pledges and hos-

tages of better things to come. But such is the effect of deism, that it withers the charm of every earthly blessing, reducing it to the mere level of a degraded animal gratification, and leaves to feed upon it like the beasts that perish, without a thought that rises above the dust or that points beyond the grave. Where then is the balm which we may apply with effect to our wounded hearts in the days of trouble and adversity, when we have rejected the aid of our Almighty Physician? But though all the troubles of life overtake us, give us but the privilege with contrite hearts to cast ourselves below the cross of our Redeemer, and pillow our heads on the bosom of Omnipotence, and we shall rise superior to all affliction, and rejoice in tribulation.

Let us think also of the value of our immortal souls before we give up that great bond of a Mediator between God and man. The sun, the moon, and stars, shall pass away; and as a vesture shall



they be changed, having served their purposes ; but the soul shall endure ; and after they shall all have been blotted out from the wide expanse of universal nature, the soul shall still survive, and stretch out its existence into everlasting ages, and spend that eternity to which it is destined, either under the burden and anguish of a just condemnation, or in the enjoyment of exalted, unmingled, and never-ending bliss. Then think what must be the doom of that soul which casts off its allegiance to God, and bids an infidel defiance to the revelation of his will and his glorious scheme of redemption.

THE END.

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